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# SYSTEMATIC SOCIOLOGY IN GERMANY

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A Critical Analysis of Some Attempts to Establish Sociology as an Independent Science

BY

THEODORE ABEL, Ph.D.

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# PREFACE

THE development of sociology in the last twenty years is characterized mainly by two aspects that distinguish this period from earlier periods in the history of sociology.

The traditional tasks laid down originally by Comte and Spencer and the other masters of sociological thought are still extant. A considerable portion of the writings of the 20th century are concerned with general problems pertaining to social evolution, the fundamental aspects and laws of social life, the progress of humanity and various phases of social philosophy.

But other writings show clearly that new trends have appeared in addition to this continuation of the traditions of the 19th century.

There is, first, the increasing emphasis put upon exhaustive monographical studies of specific aspects of social life, based upon detailed and specialized research employing inductive methods and quantitative analysis.

Secondly, there is the attempt to narrow the field of sociology to a limited but homogeneous subject-matter that would make sociology an autonomous and specialized science. According to this trend sociology would cease to be a general science, the task of which is the coordination of the results of the various social sciences into a coherent interpretation of social life as a whole. Nor would it be a theoretical discipline deriving material for synthesis from history and ethnology, i. e. a philosophy of history or culture theory. Instead, sociology would confine itself to a special field of inquiry that is not part of the field of any other science.



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The two trends mentioned are of sufficient importance to warrant their comprehensive analysis and interpretation.

The systematic treatment of the accomplishments of sociological research in recent years, the history of its successes and failures and the discussion of the attempts to improve and refine the tools of analysis is a formidable task that can be accomplished only through cooperative effort. The work of the Committee on Scientific Methods in the Social Sciences of the Social Science Research Council constitutes an important step in this direction.

To our knowledge, no comprehensive treatment of the attempts made by various writers to establish sociology as an autonomous and specialized science has been given. It shall, therefore, be the purpose of this essay partly to fill the need by offering a presentation and critical analysis of some of these attempts.

Our inquiry is necessarily limited in scope and deals exclusively with the works of German writers. This is justified by the fact that the various attempts to establish sociology as an independent science, which is the outstanding feature of German sociological thought in recent years, are closely interrelated and require a special treatment.[1]

A particular situation is responsible for this development of sociology along specializing lines in Germany. Here the path toward the recognition of sociology as an academic

[1] An added reason, which has influenced us in our selection is the fact that the works of the writers discussed, excepting Simmel's, are comparatively unknown in this country. We have included the works of Simmel despite the extensive exposition of his theory by Spykman (*cf.* his *Social Theory of Georg Simmel*, Chicago, 1925), largely because Spykman has failed to give the necessary critical analysis of Simmel's theory. The effort to establish sociology as an independent science is, of course, not limited to German sociologists alone. Among others, it is evident in the writings of the Chicago school and finds an ardent defender in the Polish sociologist, Florjan Znaniecki (*cf.* his "Object of Sociology," *Am. Jour. of Soc.*, vol. 32, 1927).

discipline was wrought with difficulties more formidable than in any other country. In recent years, however, an astounding development of sociology as an academic discipline and an increase in the production of strictly sociological writings is conspicuous. This may partly be attributed to the fact that the contributions of research abroad, particularly in France and America, found their way into German literature and led the German academicians to realize that they had remained behind a movement that was rapidly forging ahead and accomplishing valuable results.[1] Secondly, a number of prominent German scientists turned sociologists "against their own will" (to use Bouglé's phrase). Economists, like Weber and Sombart, ethnologists, like Vierkandt and Thurnwald, jurists, like Sauer, Ehrlich and Kelsen, historians, like Troeltsch and Solomon, philosophers, like Scheler and Jerusalem, embarked upon sociological investigations or sociological interpretations of their respective fields of inquiry. Thirdly, the War was potent in impressing the need for sociological investigations, of pluralistic behavior and the problems of group-life for the study of which no adequate provision had been made.

But that sociology to-day is being introduced into the curriculum of most of the German universities is due largely to the elimination of the most formidable obstacle to sociological developments in Germany: the opposition to sociology on the part of representatives of the social sciences. This opposition was partly due to the fact that the arguments of Treitschke[2] and Dilthey[3] against sociology, found general acceptance among the representatives of the various social sciences as well as the historians. But, as Oppenheimer aptly

[1] *Cf.* Vierkandt, *Jahrbuch fuer Soziologie*, vol. ii, p. 75.

[2] *Gesellschaftswissenschaft*, Leipsic, 1863.

[3] *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*, edition of collected works, Leipsic, 1914, vol. i, pp. 108, 115 *et seq.*

points out,[1] the fear of competition and the threat to established prerogatives was its main cause.

In view of this biased attitude, German sociologists were forced to find a basis for their science that would make the opposition ineffective. The most promising ground was, obviously, the delimitation of a special and independent field of inquiry. That this was the most acceptable basis which could lead to a recognition of sociology by its opponents is shown by the following statement of one of the most aggressive adversaries of sociology, the historian, S. von Buehlow: "Should it not be possible to recognize sociology as a *Specialwissenschaft,* then it could not be recognized at all." [2] This attitude, therefore, accounts primarily for the prevalent attempt in Germany to establish sociology as an independent science.

Among German sociologists the outstanding protagonists of sociology as a science with a special and limited subject-matter of its own, are Georg Simmel, Alfred Vierkandt, Leopold von Wiese and Max Weber. Each of these writers has set forth a system of such a sociology, the separate analysis of which is attempted in this essay. The questions with which we shall be concerned pertain to the subject-matter suggested by the respective systems, the tasks to be pursued in its study, the systematization of the subject-matter and the methods of its analysis. Our treatment of the problem, therefore, refers mainly to its methodological aspects. The descriptive writings of the authors are not specifically dealt with or reviewed but are utilized as material for the illustration of methodological propositions.

The four sociological systems discussed by us are interrelated to a considerable extent. Besides the analysis of their methodological aspects we have dealt, also, with their inter-

[1] *System der Soziologie,* Jena, 1922, vol. i, pp. 125 *et seq.*

[2] *Soziologie als Lehrfach,* Munich and Leipsic, 1920, p. 47.

dependence and attempted to point out the essential similarities and differences.

The interpretation of the sociological systems of Simmel, Vierkandt, v. Wiese and Weber, and their similarities and differences, is not, however, the only aim of this essay. Its main purpose is a critical appraisal of the propositions which these systems contain. This is done with the object in view of ascertaining the extent to which the authors succeeded in justifying the establishment of a new science dealing with a specific and limited group of social phenomena, differentiated from the other social sciences sufficiently to constitute an autonomous field of inquiry.

The point of departure for our criticism will be the postulate that the validity of a scientific system depends upon

1. An adequately delimited subject-matter,
2. Justifiable tasks of investigation,
3. A basis for the systematization of the subject-matter,
4. Adequate methods of investigation.

These propositions constitute the test the application of which shall help us to reach a conclusion as to the validity of the main thesis propounded by the four writers.

In opposition to those who claim that sociology is to be a special science are those who like Oppenheimer [1] and Sorokin [2] assert its character to be that of a general science of social phenomena.

With the conflict between these two groups we are not concerned, since it seems to us to be without foundation. On the surface the contrast appears valid enough. On the one hand is the claim that sociology constitutes a general class with regard to which the social sciences are sub-classes;

[1] *Op. cit.*

[2] *System of Sociology*, Leningrad, 1922 (in Russian), vol. i, chap. i.

on the other hand is the claim that sociology itself is a subclass. The exponents of a specializing science argue that sociology as a general science cannot be an independent discipline since it lacks a field of investigation of its own, and its progress depends upon developments within the social and historical sciences respectively. Furthermore, its position as a general science makes sociology necessarily evaluating, since the interpretation of social life as a whole depends, in the last analysis, upon the *Weltanschauung,* the subjective point of vantage of the interpreter, that will also govern his selection from the accumulated data of the social sciences. On the other hand, behind the conception of sociology as a philosophy of history or culture theory is seen the assumption of general laws to which all social life conforms, of universal stages of development, all of which possess a highly speculative character. The protagonists of a general sociology argue in turn that a general science of social life is necessary just as biology is needed as a general science of organic life to supplement the special sciences: botany, zoology, etc. They deride, therefore, the efforts of sociologists who seek their subject-matter of investigation in some specific phase of social life.

The unreality of the conflict is evident from the fact that the claims of both groups are valid in themselves. There is indeed a place for a general science of social life and a new social science is necessary when it can be shown that there are aspects of social life not specifically dealt with by the other social sciences. The conflict resolves itself, therefore, into a mere struggle for a name and thus is without foundation.

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# CHAPTER I

## The Formal Sociology of Georg Simmel

### I. THE NATURE OF SOCIETY

The point of departure from which Simmel proceeded in developing his system of sociology was a new interpretation of the nature of society. Two main theories of the nature of society have dominated social theory in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One was the atomistic, the other the organic theory. The atomistic theory, as a direct outgrowth of nominalism and the rationalistic-individualistic philosophy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, emphasized the autonomy of the individual and of inherent reason as the determinant of behavior. The individual was pictured as an independent, self-sustaining entity and the community as a mechanical summation of individuals. Society was thought to have resulted from rational reflection that has led to a social contract, an idea taken from Roman jurisprudence to explain the existence of government and of society. The bases of social life were perceived to be "natural rights" as the products of reason. It was Kant who gave the most cogent elaboration of the individualistic conception of society and the theory of natural rights.[1]

In Germany, the organic theory of society was an outgrowth of idealistic philosophy on the one hand and the works of the historical school of jurisprudence and political economy on the other. The discovery of "society" as something distinct from and opposing the state that had been

[1] Kant, J., *Metaphysik der Sitten, Kritik der praktischen Vernunft.*

sponsored by the French Revolution, led the representatives of this theory, such as Hegel,[1] Fichte [2] and the speculative sociologist, L. von Stein,[3] to postulate it as a metaphysical entity which they expressed in the concept *Volksgeist*.

In Toennies [4] we find a systematic effort to reconcile the salient points of the two theories, while ignoring the obvious inadequacies of their conclusions. To him social life has an organic as well as an individualistic-rational aspect. A society can be an organic group (Gemeinschaft) or an association based upon interests (Gesselschaft) depending on whether organic sympathy (Wesenswille) or rational choice (Kuerwille) are present. From the first, results an organic relationship between human beings which is preeminently a community of blood or of property or merely likemindedness. Its fundamental types are blood-relationship, neighborhood and friendship. From rational choice result purposeful relations in which the individuals "are separated in spite of association, whereas in *Gemeinschaft* they are associated in spite of separation".[5] *Gesellschaft* represents an aggregate of individuals held together by mutual agreement. It is a fictitious, conventional relationship wherein each individual seeks his own advantage.

Simmel did not follow any of these theories. He took a new approach to the problem of the nature of society, by bringing the concepts of "relation" and "function" into the foreground as explanatory principles. Already Gumplowicz had realized the importance of relations as the characteristic phenomena of social life when he defined sociology

[1] Hegel, W., *Philosophie des Rechts.*

[2] Fichte, J. G., *Reden an die deutsche Nation.*

[3] Stein, Lorenz v., *Der Begriff d. Gesellschaft u. die soziale Geschichte d. franzoesischen Revolution bis 1830,* Munich, 1921 (1st edition, 1831).

[4] Toennies, F., *Gemeinschaft u. Gesellschaft,* 3rd ed., Leipsic, 1923.

[5] *L. c.,* p. 198.

as "the analysis of the relations between different groups and of groups to the individuals of which they are composed".[1] But Gumplowicz had spoken of groups as "unities" and "higher personalities".[2]

Simmel recognized the inadequacy of the organic theory, particularly its postulate of a group mind, and the superficiality of the atomistic theory. Society is to him a function manifested in dynamic relations among individuals and in interactions between individual minds.[3] He says that "society exists wherever a number of individuals enter into reciprocal relationships".[4] It is not a rigid "substance", nothing "in itself", but functional in all its aspects and therefore a constant process, a continuous becoming.

According to Simmel, the individual becomes a variable in a functional equation. The "unity" that society represents appears in a new aspect. "Society is not an integral unit in the sense that from it the qualities, relations and transformations of its parts can be deduced; there exists only relations and actions between individuals of whom we may say, from a certain point of view, that they are forming a unity."[5] But this depends upon the perspective from which human activities are looked at. Thus, from a certain distance the individual appears as a distinct unit; if the distance is increased society appears as though it were a unitary whole. Hence Simmel considers the question of unity a purely relative matter. To him "unity in the empirical sense is nothing more than interaction of elements; an organic body is a unity because its organs manifest a closer interchange of energies than they manifest in relation to any external object.[6]

[1] Gumplowicz, *Soziologie u. Politik*, Leipsic, 1892, p. 53.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Grundlagen der Soziologie*, Berlin and Leipsig, 1917, p. 12.

[4] *Soziologie*, Leipsig, 1908, p. 5.

[5] *Grundlagen*, p. 14.

[6] *Soziologie*, p. 5 *et seq.*

Since society exists wherever reciprocal relations between individuals occur, it includes, according to Simmel, many more aspects than have been recognized by either the individualistic or the organic theories of society. Not merely do the large structures (state, family, institutions) constitute society; they are a small, although conspicuous, fraction of the relationships that exist between individuals. But society is also made up of innumerable minor types of relationships and reciprocal actions, and these "molecular" occurrences really bring society, as we know it, into existence. These processes of interaction represent society in *status nascens* and furnish the real material for a science of society. The great systems and social structures are "crystallizations" only of these interactions that directly and continually take place between individuals.[1]

Thus interpreted, society is in a constant process of realization and, its essence being interaction, it is nothing concrete in itself. In fact there may be more or less "society" according to the appearance or disappearance of synthetizations of individual activities, group formation or other multiform processes of association.[2]

Because of this dynamic character of social life, Simmel adopted instead of the term *society*, which has the connotation of something static, the term societalization (Vergesellschaftung) to designate the object-matter of sociological investigations.

It can be seen that Simmel's conception of society successfully avoids the pitfalls of the organisist's conception of "wholes" into which the individual merges and of the atomistic theory that did not account adequately for social processes. In his emphasis upon the functional aspect of society, i. e., as process of societalization through inter-

[1] *L. c.*, p. 18.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 11.

action, he is among the originators of the new trend in sociological theory which arose in the last two decades of the nineteenth century as a reaction against social realism in any form. In America, Professor Giddings has given the most cogent statement of this position; society is not an organism but an organization, and organization "is a complex of psychic relations",[1] the mingling and conversing of individuals,[2] and in essence "the sum of formal relations in which associating individuals are bound together".[3]

With regard to the theory of the social mind, Simmel takes an equally modern stand. According to him, the fact of pluralistic behavior, the qualitative difference between individual and group action, the existence of such phenomena as norms, social institutions, collective representations, etc., that impose themselves upon the individual mind, do not presuppose a superindividual mind for their explanation.[4] Simmel distinguishes mental processes from the social content that they carry and shows that, while the processes can take place only in the individual mind, the social content that is shared by many is objective and possesses validity independent of the individual mind. To the problems involved in the objectivity of social phenomena and collective action, Simmel has given due recognition in his sociological researches, particularly in his analysis of the crowd[5] and of the phenomena of group persistence[6] and the social level.[7] The study of the modification of individual behavior under social influences, however, he delegates to social psychology

[1] Giddings, F. H., *Principles of Sociology*, New York, 1896, p. 420.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 3.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Soz.*, p. 559.

[5] *L. c.*, p. 175 *et seq.*

[6] *L. c.*, p. 494 *et seq.*

[7] *Grundlagen*, p. 110.

which he considers as a branch of individual psychology.[1] The concepts of interaction and interrelation which express the nature of society, Simmel has taken as the point of departure for his attempt to construct a new basis for sociology.

Simmel agrees with Dilthey,[2] that sociology cannot be a general science of society: he argues that "since all human activities take place within society . . . . everything that is not an object of investigation by the natural sciences would thus be the object-matter of sociology".[3] Sociology, should it comprise the totality of social phenomena, would merely be a label for the social sciences.

Simmel also rejects the possibility of conceiving sociology as a method for the social sciences that would furnish a new technique for the interpretation of social phenomena.[4] He admits that all social occurrences should be viewed as the result of interaction and co-operation between individuals, as a summation and sublimation of countless individual contributions which generate social forces and express themselves in social structures. But should this method of interpretation be the object of sociology, it cannot claim to be an independent science; just as induction as a principle of investigation is utilized by all sciences but is not a science in itself.

Simmel claims, therefore, that sociology can establish

[1] *L. c.*, p. 563.

[2] *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. i, "Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften, Leipsic," 1914. According to Dilthey the task of studying society can only be accomplished by a separate treatment of its various aspects (p. 111). The study of society as a whole presupposes general laws and fundamental principles which to Dilthey is a metaphysical assumption (p. 91): "pre-scientific and pre-analytical" p. 96).

[3] *Soz.*, p. 2.

[4] *L. c.*, p. 3. The position that sociology merely offers a method to the social sciences had been held by Albion Small (*cf.* his *Meaning of Social Science*, Chicago, 1910).

itself as an independent science only if a set of phenomena is found in the process of societalization that is not the object-matter of any of the social sciences.

He arrived at this set of phenomena through an analysis of the phenomenon of interaction, according to which he found society to be constituted of form and content.[1]

The distinction between form and content is the keystone of Simmel's sociological system, and we have to inquire, therefore, what are the meaning and the implication of this distinction.

### *Form and Content*

It is unfortunate that Simmel found it necessary to utilize two concepts as the basis for his theory that carry a well-defined, time-honored meaning, at the same time imparting to them a novel connotation. Thus Simmel strongly emphasizes the fact that the discrimination he makes between form and content in society is something radically new and that "the meaning of the distinction can only be comprehended intuitively (unmittelbar) in its unique sense and should not be confounded with the usual meaning of the terms".[2] Consequently, the prerequisite for the understanding of the nature of Simmel's "form" and "content" is a detachment of all vested meanings from the terms—from what form, for example, means in geometry and æsthetics (shape and configuration), in philosophy (entelechy of Aristotle), in politics (form of government), in logic (categories).

What, then, is the unique meaning of "form" and "content"? It is Simmel's contention that what constitutes "society" in the strict sense is not the purposes and activities of individuals nor the values that they create, maintain

[1] *Soz.*, p. 5.

[2] *Ibid.*

or desire. These are only the necessary conditions that make society possible; they are the material upon which society comes into existence. Society is established through the fact that individuals come in contact with each other and that because of these contacts they act upon each other. Hypothetically, it is possible to imagine that individuals may realize their interests without ever coming into contact. There would then be only an isolated next-to-each-other but no society. For society to arise it is necessary that on the basis of their interests, whether "material or ideal, momentary or permanent, conscious or unconscious, casually or teleologically determined", individuals interact, that is, perform action for, with and against others.[1]

To the actualizations of interaction which take place in an infinite variety of kinds or types, Simmel has applied the term "form". And since they are the factors which make society possible, he has called them *forms of societalization* (Formen der Vergesellschaftung).[2]

A "form" then is a kind of interaction that takes place between individuals in their reciprocal relationships. In order, for example, to realize certain purposes, individuals may have to act against each other; conflict would then be the form of interaction. Or, when individuals choose to imitate one another, if they co-operate, divide their labor or subordinate themselves to others, imitation, co-operation, division of labor and subordination are the respective forms. Again, if they enter into more or less stable associations, form groups, establish relations that define spheres of action, associations, formation of groups and relations are "forms".

"Content", on the other hand, is everything that enters into the forms, everything that obtains a societal character,

[1] *L. c.*, p. 6.

[2] The sub-title of his *Soziologie*.

by realizing itself " in and through" forms.[1] This involves the totality of all concrete elements that make up social life, or the historical actuality, as Simmel calls it: i. e., the social products (a religious belief, or a norm of conduct), the activities of individuals and groups in pursuit of interests and the individuals themselves (whom Simmel calls social elements [2]), together with their "desires, interests, purposes, inclinations and mental states ".[3] In short, it is the totality of material and non-material culture and of cultural activities that Simmel designates by the term *content*. In Simmel's words: " content may be of an objective kind, the production of a work, the progress of the mechanical arts, the domination of an idea, the success or failure of a political combination, the development of language, of customs, etc., or it may be of a subjective nature and concern the innumerable sides of personality which through societalization find stimulus, satisfaction and development, now towards a refinement, now towards a deterioration of morals ".[3] Content is " the body, the material, of the social process ".[4]

Every social situation (and we have to remember that " social " always implies interaction) has, according to Simmel, a " content " and a " form ". It contains in one respect concrete elements: human beings and their desires and emotional experiences and as factual material — economic, technical, legal and æsthetic values, which are the conditions and the basis of the social situation. In another respect, the situation represents a type or types of interaction.

This is the " unique sense " of the distinction between

[1] *L. c.*, p. 7.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 58.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 6.

[4] *Annals of the Amer. Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. vi, p. 56.

[5] *L. c.*, p. 54.

" form " and " content " and the relation that exists between them.

In a way, the connotation given by Simmel to the two terms is not as " unique " as would appear from his statement to this effect. A certain analogy to the use of the terms in geometry and art can be discerned in the fact that Simmel's " form " also refers to the configuration of concrete elements, i. e., the way parts are connected into a whole. There also is analogy to logical forms or categories, in Simmel's conception of a societal form as the means through which a content becomes societal. We are reminded of Kant's definition of a logical form as that, " which makes it possible that experiences appear as ordered in certain relations ".[1]

From the methodological point of view, undoubtedly "uniqueness " lies in the significance that Simmel attaches to the discrimination between societal form and content. It serves Simmel as the basis upon which he constitutes sociology as the science that studies the pure forms of societalization in abstraction from content.

## II. SOCIOLOGY—THE STUDY OF FORMS

Simmel postulates a sociology as the study of forms because to him it is the only alternative that gives to sociology an object-matter for investigation, not specifically dealt with by any of the social sciences. That this alternative should still be open is due to the fact that the division of labor between the various social sciences was made according to Simmel " on the basis of different kinds of contents ".[2] So thorough have these sciences been, however, that there is no segment of content left that may properly constitute the object-matter of sociology. Hence, there is nothing within the socio-historical actuality with which sociology could deal, without

[1] *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, p. 49.

[2] *Soz.*, p. 9.

encroaching upon the prerogatives of another science. With regard to the concrete and factual manifestations of social life, sociology thus finds itself in the position of the poet in Schiller's famous poem, *"Die Teilung der Erde"*, who appears before Zeus after the earth had been divided among the various occupants too late to get his share, and has to be satisfied with a seat in heaven.

But the other constituent part of society—the forms—remain to be investigated, and since they constitute society in the strict sense, it is only appropriate for sociology, commonly defined as the science of society, to take up the task.

In order that sociology may be an independent science, form (according to Simmel) must be separated from the content with which it appears. "The all and only possibility of building a special science of society as such rests upon the study of forms in isolating mental abstraction from the concrete aspects of social life." [1] In other words, sociology ought to concern itself with the pure facts of societalization by abstracting forms of interaction from their connection with economic, religious, legal, ethical and intellectual purposes, interests, activities and values and to make the forms a "separate field of investigation".[2]

In projecting for sociology the task of studying the pure forms of societalization, Simmel maintains that he has created a new formal science that is to occupy a place alongside geometry and logic. The procedure in both of these sciences is similar to the one proposed for sociology. Geometry abstracts the forms that embody the most divergent material contents, and leaves these to physics and chemistry for analysis; similarly, logic considers the categories of cognition in abstraction from the multiplicity of cognized things to which they apply.[3]

[1] *L. c.*, p. 7.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 9.

[3] *L. C.*, pp. 8, 10.

Simmel cautions us, however, that the difficulties of realizing the task of sociology are considerably greater than those faced by geometry and logic, respectively. It is not always easy to distinguish form from content since their difference ultimately is only relative, as "the same thing in any relation if looked at from above appears as form while if looked at from below must be recognized as content".[1] Furthermore, there is no logical way by which an objectively valid separation of an historical occurrence into the factual and the formal elements can be accomplished, since the three fundamental factors of social phenomena: the individuals, their interactions, and the factual conditions, are so intertwined that in many cases it is exceedingly difficult to organize each into an independent series.[2] For that reason Simmel contends that sociology will have to depend upon an intuitive procedure, a specific "*Einstellung des Blicks*",[3] although he believes that ultimately accurate methods may be devised by which a demonstrable separation of form and content will be possible. In spite of all these difficulties, however, Simmel firmly asserts the validity of the study of the pure forms of societalization from which everything is eliminated that is historically realized in society.[4]

### *The main theses of Simmel's sociology*

Our analysis so far has brought out the nucleus of Simmel's sociological theory. It comprises four interrelated theses:

1. In society we may distinguish forms and contents.
2. Contents are studied by the social sciences.

[1] *L. c.*, p. 436.
[2] *L. c.*, p. 16.
[3] *L. c.*, p. 15.
[4] *L. c.*, p. 46.

3. Sociology studies the forms of societalization.
4. Forms have to be studied in separation from all elements of actuality.

Of these theses, the fourth is the most fundamental and the question of its scientific validity, the crucial test of Simmel's theory. It will, therefore, be our next task to find out what is the implication of the separation of form from content.

What we have said so far about the nature of form and content is inadequate for a precise answer. It will be necessary to go into a further analysis of the two concepts, and in view of the new task, to give particular attention to the relation that exists between form and content.

### III. IMPLICATION OF THE SEPARATION OF FORM AND CONTENT

The form and the content of any social situation are conceived by Simmel as being one in reality.[1] Form cannot have an independent existence from content; it is a mental abstraction just as a geometrical form which has no actuality without the matter of which it is the form. Content determines form, since the specific modifications of material purposes and interests always decide about the specific form in which they make their appearance.[2] Forms are called forth by the factual conditions of social life. In view of this, we must recognize that only content possesses objective reality, whereas form, being an abstraction, is conceptual in nature. It is a function of the human mind which views content as manifesting itself in certain modes of appearance. In other words, form is a category with which we designate certain relations and juxtapositions that exist between concrete elements of social reality. It identifies a particular co-

[1] *L. c.*, p. 6.

[2] *L. c.*, pp. 10, 47.

ordination and sequence of these elements. We may think of form, therefore, as the *definition* of a social situation or a societal occurrence.

1. *Examples of forms and analysis of their meaning*

A view of the following list of forms, collected from Simmel's writings, will make this clear.

We find that most of Simmel's "forms" fall under the following classes:

1. Characterizations of complex situations, e. g. "slavery", "legal contest", "exchange of goods".[1]
2. Characterization of norms regulating human conduct, e. g., "law", "custom", "mores", "honor".[2]
3. The complex of characterizations of social types, embodying specific behavior-patterns on their part and specific attitudes of the group with regard to them, e. g., "the stranger", "the poor", "the teacher", "the middle-man".[3]
4. Definition of groups, e. g., "family", "secret society", "political party".[4]
5. Characteristic elements and properties of group structure, e. g., "hierarchy", "stability" and "elasticity", "centralization", "group persistence".[5]
6. Characterization of relations into which individuals enter, e. g., "conflict", "super- and subordination".[6]
7. Generalizations upon social processes, as typically illustrated by the following quotation: "Toward the end

[1] *L. c.*, pp. 218, 266, 590, 430.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 59 *et seq.*

[3] *L. c.*, pp., 685 *et seq.*, 464.

[4] *L. c.*, pp. 719 *et seq.*, 372.

[5] *L. c.*, pp. 384, 161; 600 *et seq.*; 306; 494.

[6] *L. c.*, pp. 247; 134.

> of the Middle Ages certain guild masters were forced through an extension of their trade relations to adopt new means of obtaining material and new ways of attracting customers which were inconsistent with the old guild principles. The ancient tradition that all masters should have a similar business organization was no longer followed, and they sought to place themselves outside of the narrow unity. With regard to the purely sociological form abstracted from the specific content, this signifies that an expansion of the group with which the individual is connected goes hand in hand with a more pronounced expression of individual peculiarities and a greater personal individual freedom." [1]

The heterogeneous subjects that the term "form" covers in the classification above have two common traits. First, they are all aspects or resultants of interaction and as such are essentially *social* in nature. Secondly, they refer not to concrete social phenomena but to their characterization, and as such are essentially *general* in nature. Form is identical then with the generalized aspects of society. Not a particular custom, but custom *per se* is a form. Nor is a specific conflict situation (the French Revolution) a form, but form is rather the general aspect that characterizes the situation, i. e., conflict, and, secondly, the less general aspect "revolution", which is a sub-form of conflict.

A thing, then, is a form if it functions as a general characterization of social situations, which otherwise may comprise different concrete aspects. Simmel's statement that "secrecy is a form because many things can be secret",[2] if enlarged can be thus restated, since it implies that anything

[1] *L. c.*, p. 15.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 358.

is a form that defines or characterizes the general aspect which a number of things have in common. Therefore: every concept that functions as a definition of a situation involving interaction between individuals or groups is a form; and every form is a general social concept.

From the preceding it follows that the relation between form and content is the same as that which exists between the general and the specific.

### 2. *The independent actuality of forms*

On the other hand, we find that Simmel claims an independent actuality for his forms. Some previously quoted statements from Simmel suggested this already. For example, the statement that content becomes societal not only *in* certain forms of interaction but *through* forms; or the statement that without forms there would be no society. Other claims of Simmel still more accentuate this actuality. Such are the claims that forms, as such, are in addition to all that goes on in and with society;[1] that they are regulated by laws of their own;[2] that they are timeless and general because their ideational meaning is untouched by the diversity of their material realizations.[3] Simmel's emphasis upon the dynamic character of forms goes still further in stressing their self-sufficiency. He points out how the rule of One, for instance, as a sociological form, shows a life of its own in that it may include within itself not only materially different contents, but persist even where a radical change of the whole sociological tendency (e. g., towards a rule of Many) would seemingly make its persistence impossible.[4]

Furthermore, actuality of form independent of content is

[1] *L. c.*, p. 10.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 13.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 495.

[4] *L. c.*, p. 163.

shown in the fact that the realization of a form without regard to any content is sometimes the sole purpose of human interaction. Not infrequently individuals fight for the sheer pleasure of fighting. A legal contest, for instance, may be fought with a bitterness that is in disproportion to the trifling issues involved; it may continue even when all ground for opposition has been dissipated.[1] Or secrecy, as a form, may be maintained where the content does not warrant any secrecy. Simmel thinks that the phenomenon of sociability is of particular interest in this connection.[2] In a social gathering the purposeful motivations that usually lead to societalization are absent, and the pure "form" is strongly and effectively accentuated. Here many forms of societalization appear as play-forms (*Spielformen*), free from all content, realized for their own sake.

### 3. *The main argument*

Simmel's main argument, however, in support of the contention that the actuality of forms in separation from content is a fundamental *in re*, is that similar forms occur with quite dissimilar contents and similar contents are found in quite dissimilar forms of socialization.

Superiority and subordination, competition, imitation, division of labor, formation of parties, representation and countless other forms are found both in a civic group and in a religious community, in a band of conspirators and in an industrial organization, in an art school and in a family. However diverse the interests from which the societalizations arise, the forms in which they occur may be similar. On the other hand, the same content can be realized in different forms of societalization. The economic interest may be realized both through competition and through deliberate organization of the producers.

[1] *L. c.*, p. 266.

[2] *Grundlagen*, p. 50.

. . . The pedagogical interest may lead to a liberal or a despotic form of relationships between teacher and pupils. . . . The interests which lie at the foundation between the relation of sexes, are satisfied in many family forms. Thus, while the forms in which the most divergent contents are realized may be identical, yet the substance may remain while the societalization that carries it may change into a variety of forms.[1]

(The relativity of form and content are here clearly indicated. Industrial organization and family, for example, in the above quotation are designated as form and content, respectively.)

This argument alone Simmel deems sufficient to justify the possibility of separating form from content, since it shows that the legitimation for the independent actuality of form "lies in the structure of the objectivity".[2]

### 4. *The implication defined*

There are, therefore, two different propositions in Simmel's theory that formulate the relation between form and content:

1. Form is a particular configuration of elements of content and as an aspect of content it is in itself only an abstraction, a general concept;

2. A particular form is not bound to a particular content by necessity and, therefore, form has an actuality of its own.

Viewed in the light of the first proposition, the "actuality" of form which the second proposition postulates can only be the actuality of the specific meaning which a generic concept carries. Only thus can the two propositions be reconciled. It follows that if forms are to be taken in their purity, i. e., without reference to the concrete elements of the

[1] *Soz.*, p. 8 *et seq.*

[2] *Ibid.*

situation which they embody, it is only this meaning that remains to be studied. This is the implication of the separation of form and content.

The study of "meaning" in this case is taken in a wider sense. It does not involve merely the definition of the form, but comprises also the wider task of determining the nature of the form with reference to the universal function which it fulfils in society, the specific characteristics that distinguish it from other forms and the mental experiences of individuals that go with it.

It is thus the actuality of certain fundamental facts that hold true wherever human beings interact that Simmel proposes for inquiry. And for this purpose, according to him, no consideration of circumstantial factors should be required. From the totality of all situations which exemplify the same form, that is taken for analysis which they all have in common.[1] This is the pure form divested of all temporal and spacial particularities, of all circumstantiality of its appearance.

The formal procedure is exemplified in the following types of Simmel's analysis.

### 5. *Examples of formal procedure*

#### *a.* Interpretations in terms of innate equipment

To this group belongs primarily Simmel's analysis of "the specific categories which man has to bring with him"[2] in order that he may be conscious of being a socius (*Bewusstsein der Vergesellschaftung*). These categories are forms which have an *a priori* character. Their discovery should help one to answer the question, "How is society possible?" just as Kant's discovery of the forms of the intellect

[1] *Soz.*, p. 13.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 32.

permitted him to answer the question, "How is the order of nature possible?" The possibility of the existence of society rests, therefore, upon certain conditions which are *a priori* functions of the human mind, and which only a formal procedure can discover. It is Simmel's contention that ultimately the discovery of every form will contribute an answer to the quesiton of the possibility of society, and he considers the content of his "*Soziologie*" to be in large degree an attempt to answer this question.[1] The formal procedure which Simmel advocates is, therefore, concerned essentially with mental processes of the individuals that make up a society, and which, because of their general and aprioristic nature, do not require a consideration of factual conditions.

*b.* Interpretations in terms of "inner experience"

The extent to which a formal procedure is dependent upon analysis of mental states is particularly in evidence in Simmel's investigation of the nature of certain forms. Here he takes the position that analysis in terms of the behavior, patterns alone cannot explain the nature of a form of interaction. It is only on the basis of inner experiences that a form can be interpreted. Thus he says: "What 'conflict' is, is a question of pure inner experience."[2] Conflict and any other form in their purity, as Simmel's formulation of the task of sociology requires us to take them, cannot be described as objectively manifested processes, but have to be interpreted as states of mind through reflection upon inner experiences, according to the thesis that "the mind is the image of society, and society is the image of the mind".[3]

[1] *L. c.*, p. 30.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 764.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 767.

### c. Interpretations in terms of polarities inherent in the structure of human behavior

The principle of polarity, which resembles Hegel's dialectic principle of thesis and antithesis in the implication of their being mutually supplementary, Simmel has formulated thus: "It is the nature of everything human that the condition for the subsistence of its various aspects is the existence of their opposites." [1] By this principle Simmel explains, for example, why there is an alternating recurrence of peace and conflict in the life of groups. The reason is that conflict fulfils the function of accentuating group unity and in order that the feeling of unity or solidarity be kept in force it is necessary that every so often antagonism towards others or the feeling of separation becomes pronounced.[2]

The fact that a group which enforces strict uniformity upon its members, thus suppressing individuality, is highly differentiated from other groups, while on the other hand a group which offers great freedom to its members is usually little differentiated from others, Simmel explains by assuming in each individual a tendency towards individualization and a tendency towards non-differentiation. These two tendencies expressing the principle of polarity, keep each other in balance so that an increased individualism within the group will go hand in hand with a diminished individualization of the group and vice versa.[3]

Polarity is shown by Simmel in most of his investigations of the nature of forms. The form of super- and subordination is dominated by the polarity between the desire for submission and the wish for superiority. The presence of secrecy in social life is explained by a need of a balance be-

[1] *L. c.*, p. 612.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 611.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 717.

tween knowing and not knowing of others which is necessary for the maintenance of social relations.

### 6. *Conclusion*

These instances show clearly that the procedure which Simmel's theory requires is philosophical and not scientific in character. The postulate of a separation of form and content, since it implies the abstract analysis of "meanings", has, therefore, no scientific validity.

How does this reflect upon Simmel's theory?

We have seen that the postulate of a separation of form and content constitutes the basis of Simmel's theory. In view of this, it is clear that so far as the establishment and justification of a *science* of society is concerned, the theory is untenable. It leads only to the creation of a new philosophical discipline of social forms but not to a new social science, comparable in purpose to the other social sciences.

The refutation of Simmel's theory by our analysis of its implications is, however, not the only evidence against it. The most striking refutation is furnished by that part of Simmel's writing in which he attempts to apply the formal procedure to the analysis of *concrete* manifestations of social life. In them is revealed a far-reaching discrepancy between his theory and the requirements of adequate analysis which was his goal. For they forced Simmel to adopt a procedure and to follow assumptions that are completely at variance with his theory.

## IV. THE REFUTATION OF SIMMEL'S THEORY BY HIS SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES

In the greater part of his sociological studies, Simmel has not followed the implications of the postulate of his theory to study *pure* forms. Instead, we encounter a type of analysis of forms, wherein the requirement of formal pro-

cedure for an exclusion of content is not maintained and where on the contrary content is the primary object of investigation.

The following examples purport to illustrate the type of analysis, which signifies on the part of Simmel a departure from his theoretical position. It is encountered wherever Simmel goes beyond generalities, beyond a mere interpretation of meaning, and deals with concrete manifestations of social life.

### 1. *Examples of a non-formal type of analysis*

#### (*a*) *Tertius gaudens* as a form of interaction [1]

This form is manifested in a situation in which a person gains advantage for himself from a conflict between two parties. According to different circumstances, the third may derive advantage in case the two parties hold each other in check and are thus unable to prevent him from so doing. Or he may be given the advantage by one party which thus aims to hurt the other. Or his advantage may consist in playing off one party against the other in case they are competing for his favors and in joining one against the other. In his analysis of this form, Simmel deals specifically with content, in so far as he draws upon the purposes, interests, tendencies and desires and the action-patterns which are involved in this situation. This includes, for instance, the desire of a third party to take advantage, the purpose of either of the conflicting parties to induce the third person to help or to deter him from interfering, the activities of the *tertius gaudens* with regard to either party in obtaining the advantage.

[1] *L. c.*, p. 111 *et seq.*

### (*b*) The position of women in modern society as a formal principle [1]

This principle leads Simmel to speak of a "social evolution of the concept 'woman'". He points out that women have for centuries functioned in a restricted sphere, a small circle of their own, and were wholly absorbed by and identified with it. There was no basis for the unification of women into a group. The isolation of women lasted as long as a complete difference between man and woman was socially recognized and determined by conditions of living. The economic and social transformation that has taken place in recent years has led women to combat the social differentiation and to seek equality, economic independence, education and social freedom. They have thus come into opposition to men, and this opposition furnishes a basis upon which they unite as women. In other words, from a small circle to which woman was attached by a single relation, a wider circle is formed which is held together by the common interest of womanhood.

Again, in this analysis of Simmel, content is involved, as, for example, in the factual condition that forms the background of the change, changed attitudes on the part of women, purposes of organization, activities by which the opposition is executed, etc.

### (*c*) The fact of group persistence [2]

Analysis of this phenomenon leads Simmel to consider the factors that make the persistence of a group possible in spite of the constant flux in group membership. These are essentially elements of content, as persistence of locality, the physiological connection between generations, the "dead hand", i. e., the accumulated material possessions of the

[1] *L. c.*, p. 442 *et seq.*

[2] *L. c.*, p. 494 *et seq.*

group, "psychological states", as patriotism, devotion and honor.

### (*d*) The "poor" as a sociological form [1]

In this analysis Simmel emphasizes the fact that poverty is not determined by a given amount of privation and a minimum level of subsistence, but that a person is considered "poor" if he is supported by others or according to existing social norms has the right to claim support. Poverty is determined not by certain quantitatively measurable conditions, but by the reaction of the group.

The reaction of the group in extending support is conditioned upon the accepted standard of living of the social strata to which an individual belongs. Poverty, therefore, is relative and depends upon the attitude taken by the group which varies with different prevailing conditions. The elements of content involved in this analysis pertain to group attitudes, pluralistic behavior, material conditions embodied in the standard of living, etc.

### (*e*) Secret society as a form [2]

Here Simmel inquires into the particular elements of the organization of a group that are conditioned by the adoption of secrecy as a method in dealing with all outsiders. The dominant element Simmel considers to be the desire on the part of the group to obtain security by throwing a veil of secrecy upon its actions and its constitution. Underlying this desire are certain factual conditions: the fact, for example, that a group in its formative period does not feel strong enough to withstand outside interference or that the group has reasons to hide its collective purpose fearing an antagonistic attitude on the part of dominant groups in society. Distinctive for the organization of a secret society are

[1] *L. c.*, p. 372 *et seq.*

[2] *L. c.*, p. 490 *et seq.*

the concrete aspects of its structure that are concerned with the maintenance of secrecy. With regard to its members, a secret society performs activities that constitute its technique for insuring secrecy. Furthermore, a secret society possesses a ritual that comprises specific usages, formulae, rites, etc. It can be seen that analysis of form in the case of secret society also resolves itself into a discovery of the factual elements of which it is comprised.

(*f*) The stability and the flexibility of group organization,[1]

respectively, are analyzed by Simmel in terms of factual circumstances or combinations of circumstances involving complexes of elements of content which affect social life.

In these references taken at random from Simmel's writings the inclusion of content in the analysis of forms is clearly in evidence. A great many more instances could be cited to bear out this point. We could quote the analysis of the types of adjustment in which conflict terminates;[2] the typical situations in which is manifested the general tendency for freedom and equality in social relations, once established, to be soon superseded by new superior-inferior relations,[3] or the analysis of such social occurrences as the fact that the person in authority subordinates himself to the laws which he has himself established,[4] or the fact that if a member of a lower social stratum accedes to a higher one, he develops an attitude of superiority towards his former associates.[5]

In many other cases where Simmel's analysis does not show the inclusion of content, it is due to a desire or over-

[1] *L. c.*, p. 574 *et seq.*

[2] *L. c.*, p. 323 *et seq.*

[3] *L. c.*, p. 218 *et seq.*

[4] *L. c.*, p. 208 *et seq.*

[5] *L. c.*, p. 225 *et seq.*

simplification on his part, since the type of problem which he selected necessitates consideration of content if its analysis is to be adequate. Such are, for example, the study of the difference in effect that distinguishes subordination to a group from subordination to one person, or the effect of intersecting group-membership which tends to define the personality of the individual more distinctly.[1] Since the effect in both cases will vary with different conditions, it is evident that consideration of particular factual circumstances is necessary in order to make the analysis adequate.

The same argument pertains to Simmel's attempts to discover correlations between various forms of interaction or between tendencies within the same form. Such instances are, the correlation between the tendency towards unification and opposition in various types of conflict situations;[2] between despotism and equality, between the degree of heterogeneity within a group and the willingness to submit to a stranger;[3] between the structure of the group and the amount of opposition that is tolerable for its maintenance, between objectivization and individualization[4] and others.[5] In these cases Simmel has neglected to give adequate consideration to content. But the nature of the problem requires that consideration be given to circumstances in order to make the correlation significant. In his schematic statements Simmel commits such fallacies of reasoning as that of setting the form in a specific complex of elements of content, but then neglecting the fact that the content is a determining factor in the situation, he generalizes on the relation between the "pure form" and a given aspect. For example, Simmel

[1] *L. c.*, p. 403; also *Soziale Differenzierung*, ch. v.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 247.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 177 *et seq.*

[4] *L. c.*, p. 370.

[5] *L. c.*, pp. 226, 576, 672.

states a correlation between radicalism and smallness in the size of a group.[1] This correlation holds true only under specific conditions; under different circumstances a large aggregate (e. g., a crowd) may be extremely radical or a small group (e. g., a protocracy for example) ultra-conservative. Frequently Simmel does not give adequate consideration to the complexity of the setting in which he establishes a correlation. He thus neglects vital conditions by emphasizing those that are only relevant to his purpose.

It is significant that Simmel himself has realized the inadequacy of establishing abstract correlations when he said that "in the realm of social life many factors are interwoven into an insoluble complexity" and "the expected effect in many cases will not take place".[2] In view of this, Simmel should have tried to steer a middle course in finding typical tendencies which would give adequate consideration to the more important circumstantial factors by which they are conditioned rather than to neglect them entirely.

### 2. *The procedure adopted in the sociological studies*

An analysis of the above samples of Simmel's writings in which he discusses questions that involve consideration of content shows that they imply a different procedure from the one which is postulated by his theory.

(1) In the first place, forms are not treated in abstraction from content but instead represent a complex of particular kinds of elements of *content*. These are explicit or implicit behavior-patterns, i. e., activities, attitudes, purposes and tendencies directed towards or bearing upon individuals or groups which thus act as stimuli and objects of behavior, respectively. A schematic analysis of conflict will serve as illustration. Conflict defines a situation in which there are

[1] *L. c.*, p. 53.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 552 (note).

activities on the part of A purposing to frustrate action of B, and where in turn reactions of B oppose the activities of A. Since conflict takes place, however, only if the actions of A call forth an antagonistic attitude on the part of B, his attitude or attitudes, and his definition of the situation as well as those of A enter into the conflict situation. It is, therefore, the combination of these specific elements of content: activities, purposes and attitudes, that make up the "form" called conflict.

That these elements of content which make up a form are of a distinct kind is shown by the fact that they differ from the behavior-patterns whose objects are economic, religious, technical, intellectual or æsthetic values, which they purport to bring forth or modify. The behavior patterns which constitute the elements of content of a form have as their object none of these values but individuals or groups with regard to whom they are enacted in order to influence them, modify their behavior, or call forth specific reactions. Since these behavior-patterns, together with the individuals and groups towards whom they are directed, are distinctive features of content peculiar to the forms of interaction, and since they are the object matter of investigation in the analysis of forms, they constitute, therefore, a segment of content that is specifically sociological in the sense Simmel employs the term. Thus, by his own writings, Simmel has contradicted his thesis that there are no concrete elements of social reality left for sociology because they have all been taken up by the other social sciences.

It must be recognized further that it was an implicit recognition of the nature of this particular content that has guided Simmel in the selection of the problems which he investigated. They all pertain to situations in which there is action of one individual upon another, of one group upon another, of an individual upon group or of a group upon individual.

It was for this reason that he dealt with such problems as the phenomenon of the stranger, since he is the object of activities and attitudes on the part of the group which he joins; or with group-action in case of opposition from outside because it involves increased coercion upon and control of the individual members of the group.

The disclosure that there is a particular kind of content that is the object of sociological analysis wherever social situations are investigated disproves Simmel's claim that there is nothing factual and concrete that could constitute the object-matter of sociology. The consequence of this disclosure is far-reaching since it questions the necessity of postulating sociology as a study of pure forms in order to justify its existence.

(2) In the second place, it is apparent that an adequate analysis of social situations requires a consideration of the setting in which a social situation occurs. This setting comprises in large measure the non-sociological (in Simmel's sense) elements of content. The necessity for this has been realized by Simmel, but it has failed to influence his theoretical argumentation. He made the following statement some time before he published his *Soziologie*: "The investigation of the forces, forms and development of societalization, of co-operation and of association of individuals must include a study of the peculiar characteristics which they take on under the influence of the particular environment in which they are realized. If, e. g., we investigate the formation of aristocracies we must not only study the process of separation of the originally homogeneous masses, the bond of association of the leaders in a class unity and the degree of repulsion which such unions manifest towards the ruling sovereign as well as towards the masses, but we must take into consideration the material interests that call forth such organizations and also the modifications which different

stages of production and variations in the dominant ideas of the time bring about." [1]

The conclusion to be drawn from this statement affects materially Simmel's thesis of the identity of forms in different situations. From the above quotation it would follow that the manifestations of a form and its history will differ with different places and at different times. The difference may refer to sequences of activities and sets of attitudes, to duration, intensity, function and transformation, etc.

We see, then, that in his sociological studies the methodological requirement to study forms in their purity is not maintained by Simmel but analyzed are different social situations from the point of view of the processes that take place in them, the factors that constitute the process and the conditions which influence it. Instead of the method proposed by the theory, two other methods are employed which correspond to the two ways in which, as we have shown, content enters into Simmel's analysis. On the one hand, there is a detachment of the particular elements that pertain to the process of interaction itself from the general setting in which they appear. The question here is what particular behavior sequences, what tendencies and attitudes with regard to the individuals or groups involved in the interaction are present and explain the social situation. The method by which this detachment is accomplished is known as the *method of isolating abstraction* [2] whereby the abstracted part from a total situation, for special purposes of analysis, is considered " as if " it were a closed system.

On the other hand, Simmel employs a *typological procedure* with regard to the aspects of the situation that do not enter directly into the process of interaction. This means

[1] *Annals of Amer. Academy of Pol. and Social Science*, vol. vi, p. 57 (note).

[2] Wundt, W., *Logik*, vol. ii, p. 12.

that in order to be able to generalize upon the results achieved by the method of isolating abstraction typical environments are constructed that represent prevalent conditions which determine the appearance of a particular form of interaction.

It is clear that these two methods constitute a procedure which is completely at variance with the requirements of Simmel's theory. Thus, the refutation of the theory by Simmel's sociological analyses becomes an established fact.

### 3. *Refutation of Simmel's main argument*

Simmel's argument, from which he deduced his thesis of the independent actuality of form and content (that the same form appears in different contents and the same content in different forms), is shown by his writings to be untenable. This argument holds true only if forms are conceived as highly abstract concepts but not taken in their concrete manifestations. Subordination, for example, in a democracy involves different attitudes, activity and purposes than subordination in an autocracy. Subordination *per se* always functions merely as a generic concept, and to say that in both cases the same "form" is manifested is to refer merely to the fact that both can be put in the same general class. But while both cases of subordination carry the same general meaning implied by the generic concept, the manifestations of subordination differ with different circumstances, i. e., with the content. For sociological analysis this general meaning is of little significance, as Simmel himself admits, without, however, realizing again the bearing that this admittance has upon his theoretical arguments. He states: "If one says that super- and subordination is a form that can be found wherever human beings associate, then there is very little gained by such a general statement. It is necessary to go into the various aspects of the relation, consider the special ways in which it is realized and to the extent

to which forms thus become specific they naturally lose their wide applicability." [1]

Wherever repetition of similar processes of interaction is observed the process has been sufficiently schematized, and thus shows recurrence in general outline or in a typical way. But in reality each social situation represented by a form, in the particular sequence and combination of its elements and including the influences to which it is subjected, is unique. Thus, only for heuristic purposes can we speak of two similar situations or forms. In Simmel's theory, however, sameness of forms in different contents is a fundamental *in re*. The implication of his theoretical arguments is "that the absolute identity of a form in diverse contents is to be held possible in principle".[2]

The identical thing, of course, holds true for the argument that the same content appears in different forms. Thus the different forms of family organization do not have all the same content while they may carry the same meaning, i. e., serve the sex or mating interest. But actually the forms are different because their respective contents (the factors and structural elements of which they are constituted) differ.

## V. CONCLUSION

Our discussion of Simmel's writings shows clearly that they embody two distinctly different interpretations of the task of studying the phenomena of interaction and societalization. But only the search for the nature and meaning of societal forms is in accord with Simmel's theory. The analysis of concrete social situations which he made presupposes a different theoretical foundation, which he, however, failed to give.

The difference between the two interpretations possible is shown by the following consideration:

[1] *Soz.*, p. 12.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 14.

1. Where the study of pure forms is the task, forms are taken as abstract qualities expressing a meaning and reflecting inner experience. As qualities they are not subject to analytical dissection, since the different circumstantial elements which carry the same quality cannot be drawn upon to explain it. In a formal procedure, to use a term that recently has come into vogue, forms are taken as *"Gestalten"*, just as a melody, for example, is a *"Gestalt"*, which is qualitatively the same no matter on what various instruments and in what keys it is played. In the other type of analysis, which we may call the analytical procedure, form is taken as a concrete social situation that is analyzed into its constituent elements and the factors conditioning the processes that take place in it are also taken into consideration.

To state this difference by way of an example: the formal procedure considers "conflict" as such, the analytical procedure analyzes a conflict *situation.*

2. From the preceding it also follows as a corollary that in a formal procedure, "form" acts as a terminus *ad quem.* It is the goal, the end-object of investigation. For an analytical procedure "form" merely fulfils the function of indicating a sociological problem—the situation in which interaction takes place—and within these limits acts merely as a terminus *a quo.*

3. The formal procedure is abstract, speculative, synthetical; the analytical procedure is concrete, and deals with observable phenomena.

4. The differences in method are equally fundamental: the method of the formal procedure is intuitive—aprioristic while the analytical procedure is inductive—empirical.

5. The formal procedure is absolute in the sense that it emphasizes the sameness of forms, whereas the inductive procedure is relativistic and takes cognizance of differences in space and time.

The differences are sufficiently fundamental to warrant the statement that they presuppose two opposite types of sociology. With the formal procedure as a basis sociology becomes a philosophical discipline, while the inductive procedure establishes sociology as an empirical science.

If we view the difference with reference to Simmel's sociological system, we may express it as an incongruity between theory and practice. Simmel has come short of recognizing this incongruity. He seems to have been undecided about his own theory, as is clearly shown in the following statement: "I hope that the method for the type of sociology which I offer herewith will become more certain and may be more clear from the execution of its task than from abstract considerations" and still more accentuated in another sentence which suggests the possibility that "the foundation may not stand as secure as the superstructure erected upon it." [1] But his writing shows he did not clearly comprehend the inadequacy of the formal procedure, which his theory advocates, for the solution of most of the problems with which he concerned himself. With the postulates of the formal procedure looming in the background, the analysis of concrete social situations is frequently kept abstract by Simmel and deals with generalities where it ought to be specific and concrete. Interference of the requirements of formality with the execution of his task have prevented him from realizing the possibilities of analysis by the methods which he employed in his writings. This also explains why Simmel gave so little attention to the kinetics of social life, the processes of change and readjustment that dominate it, since formal procedure is essentially static. We may conclude, therefore, that the lack of realization, on the part of Simmel, of the incongruity between his theory and his actual pro-

[1] *L. c.*, p. 17.

cedure has deprived him of valuable contributions to sociology.

If we view Simmel's sociological system in the light of the requirements of an adequate methodology which we have outlined in the introduction, it is evident that his theory fails to furnish the basis for sociology as a science. If sociology is to be a science, it cannot adopt a formal procedure. In so far then as Simmel's theory is an exposition and advocacy of formal procedure, it can be maintained that he has failed to achieve the goal which he set out to achieve, i. e., to establish and justify sociology as a science.[1]

On the other hand, Simmel's sociological studies show clearly that a special science dealing with the phenomena of interaction is possible and desirable. The activities and attitudes of individuals bearing upon other individuals, the relations and groups which interaction establishes constitute a specific and homogeneous subject-matter that is an adequate object of investigation for a special science.

[1] Simmel's sociological system has been most seriously criticized by the following writers: W. Wundt (*Volkerpsychologie*, vol. vii, Leipsig, 1927, p. 35 *et seq.*) who claims that sociology as a science of forms of societalization independent of the concrete manifestations of social life is "not a formal but an indefinite science, i. e., it cannot exist as a science at all"; F. Oppenheimer (*System d. Soziologie*, Jena, 1922, p. 112 *et seq.*), who says that Simmel's is as artificial as Linne's system, and the differentiation between form and content is a contrast of words only; P. A. Sorokin (*System of Sociology* (in Russian), vol. i, Petrograd, 1920, p. 26 *et seq.*), to whom the difference between form and content is the same as between the generic and the specific, and form, therefore, is merely a name; F. Znaniecki (*Introduction to Sociology* [in Polish], Poznan, 1922, pp. 238 *et seq.*, 247), who contends that Simmel was wrong in maintaining that the phenomena, on the basis of which individuals act for or against one another or organize into groups, are never social; O. Spann (*Kurzgefasstes System d. Gesellschaftslehre*, Leipsic, 1914, pp. 17 and 18), who has shown that all social sciences operate with the form-concept and that consequently "forms" cannot be the *differentia specifica* of sociology; Eleutheropoulos (*Monatschriften f. Soziologie*, Leipsic, 1908); A. Small (*Amer. Jour. of Sociol.*, vol. xv, pp. 189-96); Massaryk (*Sozialwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, vol. v, 1908); *et al.*

Unfortunately Simmel formulated his theory before he made his sociological studies instead of building a theory upon the results of these studies. He thus failed to give the methodological basis for this special science. We have tried to deduce the methodological implications which Simmel's writings embody. But they are far from meeting our requirements for an adequate methodology. The tasks of investigation are not specific, no basis for systematization of the subject-matter is given and the methods of investigation employed require further elaboration. The only positive theoretical contribution is the delimitation of the subject-matter, but it is, nevertheless, confusing because of the application of the ambiguous term " form ".

A significant confirmation of our discrimination between two distinct trends in Simmel's sociology is furnished by the works of his successors: Alfred Vierkandt and Leopold von Wiese. The theories of both Vierkandt and v. Wiese had their inception in Simmel's works. Both theories, however, are radically different in their approach and methods. The reason for this lies in the fact that Vierkandt took as his point of departure the formal procedure suggested by Simmel's theory, while the inductive procedure implicit in Simmel's writings is the point of departure of v. Wiese. The two types of procedure undifferentiated by Simmel are clearly separated and each in turn is disentangled from the other and made the basis of a sociological system. Vierkandt through the application of the phenomenological method believes he has found a means by which sociology as a science of social categories can be established. v. Wiese sees the possibility for sociology as a science in the application of the behavioristic and quantitative approach to the study of concrete social processes.

The contributions to the methodology of sociology made by Vierkandt and v. Wiese are discussed in the chapters that follow.

# CHAPTER II

## The Phenomenological Sociology of A. Vierkandt

### 1. *Introduction*

Vierkandt is well known through his writings in the field of culture history to which he has made notable contributions.[1] The book that is most responsible for his renown is an inquiry into the phenomenon of cultural continuity, entitled *"Stetigkeit im Kulturwandel"*.[2] This work is of particular interest in view of the remarkable insight with which Vierkandt at that time (twenty years ago) set forth theories on the origin and growth of culture which only in the last few years have found adequate consideration in American literature on culture theory.[3]

[1] *Naturvoelker und Kulturvoelker*, Leipsic, 1896; "Die politischen Verhaeltnisse der Naturvoelker," *Zeitschr. f. Soz. wiss.*, vol. iv; "Fuehrende Individuen bei den Naturvoelkern," *ibid.*, vol. xi; "Das Heilige in den primitive Religionen," *Diskursen*, vol. i; "Die Anfaenge d. Religion u. Zauberei," *Globus*, vol. xic, *et al.*

[2] Leipsic, 1908.

[3] We refer particularly to Ogburn's *Social Change* and Wissler's *Man and Culture*. The central idea of Vierkandt's book is that nothing in the realm of culture, no culture trait and no human achievement appears spontaneously, but that everything is the result of a gradual process of accumulation and has its roots in past history. The principle which underlies this idea Vierkandt has called the principle of continuity, and according to him it expresses itself in cultural inertia and cultural determinism. He has recognized, therefore, the significance of the traditional material for the interpretation of cultural phenomena as well as the necessity of explaining "culture in terms of culture."

The dependence of new inventions and institutions upon previous accumulations through a process of gradual development is traced by Vierkandt with respect to material culture for example, in the history of the

But the importance of Vierkandt's production from the methodological point of view with which we are primarily concerned lies in the fact that he at one time considered the problems of culture history the legitimate field of sociology. The "*Stetigkeit im Kulturwandel*" bears a subtitle: a sociological study. Sociology would thus be the theory of culture. Accordingly, it would be its task to generalize upon the material presented by ethnology and history. The sociologist would elaborate "general schemata for the historical material,[1] measure the rate of diffusion, etc.

Subsequently, however, Vierkandt changed his position and took a different point of view with regard to the task and method of sociology. He set forth his new position in a recently published treatise entitled "*Gesellschaftslehre, Hauptprobleme der philosophischen Soziologie*"[2] and in

bicycle (*l. c.*, p. 18) of economic institutions, language, religion, art and science (*l. c.*, p. 5).

But Vierkandt also recognized the implications of the principle of continuity. Thus the restricted role which the "Great Man" plays in social change is emphasized (*l. c.*, pp. 160 *et seq.*, 133) as well as the bearing of multiple invention upon this question (*l. c.*, pp. 56, 23). He recognized likewise the insignificance of chance as a factor in social change and the limited function of needs as motives of change. Vierkandt also disputed the theory of unilateral stages of social development and instead emphasized the irrationality which according to him dominates social evolution. Furthermore, he was aware of the principle of cultural lag which he considered characteristic of "the physiognomy of modern civilization" (*l. c.*, p. 59).

The main part of Vierkandt's inquiry is concerned with the mechanism of change in culture which is attributed by him to invention and diffusion dependent, however, upon the simultaneous presence of three conditions: a certain maturity or preparation on the part of a cultural group to accept the new, the presence of certain needs and the initiative of leading individuals. The consequences of the lack of any one of them are traced by him particularly as they affect the processes and rate of diffusion (*l. c.*, pp. 162 *et seq.*, 116 *et seq.*).

[1] *L. c.*, p. vii.

[2] Stuttgart, 1923.

several articles. The outline and criticism of this position will concern us in the section that follows.

### 2. *The Task of Sociology*

Vierkandt conceives sociology to be the science which deals with the fundamental and primary aspects of social life. The following remarks preface his *Gesellschaftslehre*:

> This book does not deal with the history of marriage nor with the origin of the state; it does not inquire after the laws of history nor after universal stages of cultural development. It is not concerned with the question of social ascendency and the nature of vocations, nor does it deal with problems of social welfare, the statistics of crime, the racial problem or the influence of culture upon natural selection. Its objects are the last forms, forces and facts of social life as such; therefore the patterns that are independent of all historical change, it is, those that follow from the nature of society.[1]

Among the prevalent definitions of sociology only one fits the task as outlined in the above quotations. This is the conception of sociology as a formal science given by Simmel, since only by formal procedure can the ultimate elements that constitute the nature of society be determined and scrutinized. It is for this reason that Vierkandt adopted Simmel's theory as the basis for his system, following his shift from the interpretation of sociology as the theory of culture to a position which defines its task as the study of "ultimate facts". The reason for the shift is not explained by Vierkandt. He claims that he does not define sociology as the "social determination of human activities" or in terms of culture, as "theory of culture" or "culture history" or again as a study of social organization in different culture areas.[2] He does not do so because such definitions would

[1] *L. c.*, p. 1.

[2] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 6 *et seq.*

imply historical problems and deal with the concrete, whereas pure sociology ought to be abstract, systematic, and formal. That is, he already proceeds from the assumptions of his new position.

Likewise, when he points out that for purposes of delimiting the field of sociology a distinction must be drawn between the material, i. e., the manifestation of social life, and the specific task of investigation,[1] this task is already assumed to be the study of the ultimate nature of society. No distinction within the material itself is attempted. The only alternative Vierkandt envisages is to make anything that is social the object of sociology, which (following Simmel) he considers an impossibility. It would make sociology an encyclopedia of the most heterogeneous matters, since there is hardly anything human which is not at the same time social.

### 3. *Definition of Sociology*

The ultimate factors of society which constitute the object-matter of sociology are manifested, according to Vierkandt, in the specific properties of the group and in the characteristics of group-life. Since Vierkandt defines the group as the carrier of interaction between its members,[2] it is primarily to interaction and its products that the field of sociology is confined. Sociology is, therefore, defined by Vierkandt as the theory of interaction and its products [3] or as the study of relations and relationships (*Beziehungen und Verhaeltnisse*) within the group and of their products.[4]

The inclusion of "interaction" and "products" in this definition requires certain qualifications. Since interaction

[1] *L. c.*, p. 11.

[2] *L. c.*, pp. 28, 31.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 10.

[4] *L. c.*, p. 17.

implies the concrete action-patterns of co-individual behavior and "products" refers to culture complexes and to historical forms, their incorporation seems to be inconsistent with the formal character of sociology which he advocates. But according to Vierkandt the theory of interaction does not concern itself with the actual processes of interaction. It only purports to discover the "last and innermost actualities of societal facts" which lie behind them, and to comprehend "the inner nature of these occurrences".[1] Considerations of the objective and external manifestation of interaction as such, therefore, are excluded. Instead, the object of investigation is transferred into the inner life of individuals. It is Vierkandt's contention that neither the naturalistic nor the cultural interpretation of society reveals its true nature. While man *does* live in a world of biological and cultural interests and values, he also lives in a world of social relations, "a realm that has qualities of its own which are different from those of the cultural and biological sphere".[2] These qualities are mental states which result from the fact of living together in a society, and hence social relations are inner relations.[3] It is the world of inner relations that expresses the true nature of society. Aggregation and external conditions and influences are not the relevant factors in society; relevant is only the inner state, the inner bond that unites individuals.[4] Formal sociology while it studies interaction is, therefore, not behavioristic. Not the behavior patterns as they mutually condition each other in interaction are considered but the types of mental states and the inner relations which they presuppose.

Likewise, the "products" are not to be investigated in

[1] *L. c.*, p. 18.

[2] *Jahrbuch f. Soziologie*, vol. ii, Karlsruhe, 1926, pp. 83 *et seq.*

[3] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 239.

[4] *Jahrbuch*, p. 81.

their external manifestations but are to help in the discovery of the ultimate, unchangeable aspects of society. As Vierkandt says: "An investigation is sociological only when its objects are not the culture complexes in their totality but the interplay of forces of interaction in the group that are behind these complexes which themselves are only sediments of these forces." [1] The formal character of sociology is thus found to be maintained by the definition.

Notwithstanding the fact that Vierkandt has adopted the idea of a formal sociology from Simmel, he is on the whole critically disposed towards him. In Vierkandt's opinion Simmel in his writings has done more harm than good to sociology.[2] Furthermore, in contradistinction to Simmel, Vierkandt considers the systematization of social phenomena the foremost task of sociology and he believes this to be possible by reducing such phenomena to "ultimate aprioristic facts",[3] which Simmel failed to do. But Vierkandt objects mainly to the fact that Simmel has not strictly adhered to the principles of formality. He claims that in developing the types of a form, Simmel has "burdened his writings with too many examples" [4] (apparently referring to Simmel's analysis of concrete social situations). Instead Vierkandt desires to give a well-worked-out set of concepts (*sauber gepflegten Begriffsapparat* [5]). These concepts are to be systematic, i. e., abstract, aprioristic concepts rather than historical concepts, which necessarily include empirical factors.[6] Domination, for example, is such a systematic concept, whereas any

[1] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 17.

[2] Koelner, *Viertelsjahrhefte f. Soziologie*, vol. i, p. 57.

[3] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 1.

[4] *Jahrbuch*, p. 73.

[5] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 2.

[6] *L. c.*, p. 16.

concrete manifestation of domination, e. g., the relation between upper and lower classes in a society, is an historical one. Indeed, restriction to systematic concepts completely fulfils the requirements of formality with respect to the separation of form and content. At the same time renewed confirmation is given to the claim which we made in connection with the analysis of Simmel's position that a study of "pure forms", a formal procedure, resolves itself into a theory of categories. This is unhesitatingly admitted by Vierkandt.[1]

The reason why Vierkandt does not hesitate to interpret sociology as a "*Kategorienlehre*"[2] is that he believes that the application of a newly devised method makes it possible to go beyond mere definitions and classifications and to make formal sociology a science of the fundamental elements and principles of social life. Vierkandt attributes Simmel's failure to accomplish the task of constructing an adequate body of knowledge for a formal sociology to the fact that at the time when Simmel wrote his *Soziologie,* this method had not yet been developed.[3] It is, therefore, Vierkandt's implied belief that in applying the new method to the study of society he achieves a decided advance over Simmel and makes the consummation of his task possible.

The new method which, according to Vierkandt, makes this performance possible is the "phenomenological method". Its fruitfulness Vierkandt sees in the fact "that it permits an extensive analysis of societal occurrences to rest upon an abstract scheme of social life, rather than lose itself in the special forms in which they appear".[4] Upon the application of the "phenomenological" method would thus depend

[1] *Jahrbuch,* p. 76.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Gesellschaftslehre,* p. 111.

[4] *L. c.,* p. 15.

the possibility of a formal sociology. Since the phenomenological method is the mainstay of Vierkandt's system it is important that the nature of the method be clearly understood. Its introduction by Vierkandt is a renewed effort to vindicate formal sociology, and it remains to be seen whether it will require a change of our conclusion with regard to the non-scientific aspect of formal sociology which we have reached in the discussion on Simmel.

### 4. *The Phenomenological Method*

The originator of the phenomenological method is the German logician, Edmund Husserl. He first applied it in his famous "*Logische Untersuchungen*" [1] to certain problems of logic but later devoted to it a special, thoroughgoing analysis in the "*Ideen zur Phenomenologie*".[2] His contributions have exercised a powerful influence in Germany, and Husserl may rightly claim to be one of the few German philosophers of recent times who have originated a new school of thought. (He has even been acclaimed as the *Descartes* of our day.[3]) Husserl's ideas have been taken up with particular eagerness by the opponents of positivism who found in them a possible basis for the revival of idealism. Intended by Husserl originally to serve as an antidote to psychologism in logic, the phenomenological method has now received much wider application. Like everything new Husserl's ideas have become fashionable and have spread into fields where there is little reason for their acceptance. Vierkandt's introduction of the phenomenological method into sociology is one instance, and he intends to uproot the

[1] Halle, 1900.

[2] *Jahrbuch f. Philosophie u. Phenomenologische Forschungen*, vol. i, 1913.

[3] *Cf.* Gronau, G., *Die Philosophie d. Gegenwart*, Langensalga, 1922, vol. ii, p. 239.

empirical inductive-experimental approach that after all has made possible the achievements of sociology and upon which its acceptability as a science rests. It was Sumner who clearly recognized this trend towards the " new " in science, when he spoke of fashions in science, and saw in them the reason because of which " methodology is eternal ".[1]

The reasoning upon which the phenomenological method is built may be presented briefly as follows.

Every " thing " as perceived in its empirical actuality possesses also a nature of its own, a specificity that constitutes its essence (*Wesen, Eidos*[2]). The process by which the essential characteristics that constitute the nature of a " thing " are discovered is called an eidetical reduction:[3] reduction from the non-essential, empirical, fortuitous. The *Eidos,* the essential nature of a " thing ", is transcendent to consciousness. But it also appears as a correlate of consciousness.[4] It is experienced by the mind; its elements are moments of an experience-stream and, therefore, have a specific meaning and intentionality.[5] " Things " as intentional objects, i. e., referring to states of consciousness or experiences of the mind, may constitute a special field of investigation.[6] These investigations are made by means of the phenomenological method.

This method requires that the attention of a person thinking about some " thing " is focussed upon the mental experiences (*Bewusstseinserlebnisse*)[7] which it calls forth, and not upon its external manifestations. Through contempla-

[1] *Folkways*, p. 193.

[2] Husserl, *Ideen zur Phenomenologie*, p. 60.

[3] Walther, G., *Jahrbuch f. Philos. u. Phenom. Forsch.*, vol. vi, p. 5.

[4] *L. c.*, p. 2.

[5] Husserl, *Ideen*, p. 67 *et seq.*

[6] *L. c.*, p. 61.

[7] *L. c.*, p. 63.

tion or " immanent reflection " with the mind centered upon itself, the inherent meaning of a " thing " is recognized with perfect evidence.[1] For example, to use an illustration given by Vierkandt,[2] the nature of " respect " cannot be defined in terms of some known quality because it is in itself an ultimate fact, a specific quality, which defies further reduction and division. Only through immediate contemplation can its essence be determined, and the way in which it differs from related effects be made clear. Likewise, the insight that " shame " differs from " fear of undesirable consequences " and, therefore, is a specific mental state, cannot be obtained through deduction or demonstration. The nature of " shame " can only, and then with perfect evidence, be found through an act of inner contemplation by one's becoming conscious of the way in which it is experienced mentally.

From the experimental side, the phenomenological method is not to be confounded with the method of introspection.[3] The introspectionist attempts to discover the elemental factors that make up mental processes. The phenomenologist on the other hand claims that he is not observing any elements or attributes, while contemplating, but that he takes the " thing " (the feeling of " shame " for example) as an irreducible quality. Furthermore, introspection requires an inductive procedure, since its results are determined by a series of repeated observations, whereas phenomenology arrives at the desired insight into the nature and meaning of the contemplated object on the basis of a single instance. The insight is of perfect evidence and, therefore, free from the possibility of error which is frequently associated with observation.

[1] *L. c.*, p. 183; *cf.* also Pfander, A., *Jahrbuch f. Philos. u. Phenom. Forsch.*, vol. iv.

[2] *Jahrbuch f. Soziologie*, p. 77 *et seq.*

[3] *Ibid.*

In addition, the phenomenologist claims that the insight which the application of the phenomenological method makes possible is not merely a subjective interpretation nor is it fortuitous. The "essence" of an object prescribes to the mind a continued series of experiences which he calls the "constitution" of the object in consciousness,[1] and this constitution is, therefore, objective. For this reason the phenomenologist also asserts that something described with perfect evidence is not only valid to the mind that performs the phenomenological analysis. To the phenomenologist it is a fundamental postulate that what is revealed through intuitive insight and clearly perceived by one, is of universal validity, since it is comprehended by the "pure ego" which is the same in every thinking being. He thus assumes a uniformity of mental life in its ultimate structure.[2] For his statements the phenomenologist, therefore, claims absolute exactness—"there are no shadings",[3] as Husserl says.

The phenomenological method excludes all inference that is drawn from results achieved by the empirical inductive method. According to Husserl, the phenomenologist puts all empirical knowledge about a "thing" into parentheses, thus making it irrelevant for the analysis of pure consciousness.[4] "There is existence as experience and existence as transcendent being",[5] i. e., in external manifestations. The two are not connected with each other; therefore "all results of empirical investigations are excluded in principle"[6] and "what gives itself to intuition has to be taken as such and

[1] Walther, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[2] *Jahrbuch f. Soziologie*, p. 78.

[3] *Ideen*, p. 81.

[4] *L. c.*, p. 94.

[5] *L. c.*, p. 36.

[6] *L. c.*, p. 18.

within the limits that it gives itself ".[1] In fact the phenomenologist asserts, and he calls it a *"kopernikanische Wendung"*, that "the world of reality is given to us in timeless ideas and that, therefore, the general and ideational does not develop from the empirical-singular but is given beforehand", thus possessing independent actuality.

The phenomenological approach is purely formal as it abstracts from all empirical content and all factual connotations. It should, therefore, make possible the realization of Simmel's thesis that form be studied in separation from content, as "pure forms". It is for this reason that Vierkandt, assuming the scientific validity of the phenomenological method, sees in it the vindication of sociology as a formal science.

It is not our purpose here to criticize the phenomenological method on its own grounds, i. e., with regard to the assumptions upon which it is based. Even should these assumptions prove to be true (at present nothing resembling "proof" has been advanced and the criticisms of Elsenhans, Volkelt and others still remain to be answered),[3] the question that is of concern to the sociologist is, Does the phenomenological method advance the task of establishing sociology as a science? The question must be answered in the negative.

### 5. *Criticism of the phenomenological method as applied in sociology*

The phenomenological method concerns itself exclusively with the disclosure of mental states, feelings and inner experiences. Applied to the data with which the sociologist is

[1] *L. c.*, p. 43.

[2] Linke, P. F., "Das Recht der Phenomenologie," *Kantstudien*, vol. xxi, p. 212.

[3] Elsenhans, Th., "Phenomenologie, Psychologie, Erkenntnisstheorie"; *Kantstudien*, vol. xx, p. 249; Volkelt, J., "Die Phenomenologische Gewissheit," *Zeitschr. f. Philos. u. philosophische Kritik.*

occupied, this method leads to a descriptive psychology which has little or no connection with sociological analysis. For examples we may refer to Vierkandt's analysis of the instinct of self-respect and the instinct of submission. According to Vierkandt, a phenomenological analysis shows that the specifically social aspect of the first instinct is its purpose "to call forth, in a deep, inner sense, the impression of superiority and to instill respect".[1] It shows the presence of an inner bond, expressed as submission, to the values and standards of valuation of the group. The instinct is sometimes manifested as a will to power[2] for the purpose of achieving distinction, to be recognized as better than others. When the instinct is satisfied, it creates a feeling of dignity, while where self-respect is hurt, the feeling of shame occurs.

A phenomenological analysis of "submission" shows that it is not due to fear or ulterior motives but that it may also imply "an inner surrender, voluntary and joyful".[3] The characteristic states that accompany submission are timidity, embarrassment, a feeling of inferiority that does not frustrate one's personality but on the contrary unfolds it through contact with a superior. Characteristic attitudes are devotion, adoration, respect. It can be recognized phenomenologically that the instinct of submission is essentially bound to the instinct of self-respect since "submission to the will of a superior means that one raises himself up to him, participates in his greatness and establishes an inner bond."[4] A feeling of distance is present but the recognition of superiority in others, whether of an individual, a group or an impersonal structure, is helpful and hence willingly accepted.

[1] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 61.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 64.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 70.

[4] *L. c.*, p. 76.

The functional urge of the instinct manifests itself in the cult of power, the persistent desire to follow a leader and in the feeling of duty, "a blind submission to an inner command".[1]

These examples show that the phenomenological method carries analysis into the opposite direction to that required by sociology. It may be necessary for sociological analysis to take into consideration psychological factors as elements of a social situation. But even then the description of mental states is not a prerequisite for the use of psychological data. Psychological terms like "self-respect" or "submission" are general characterizations of a number of different behavior-patterns and they will be used, if necessary, whenever these behavior-patterns are found, whether the mental states which phenomenology discloses are present or not. Furthermore, phenomenology points to the aspects of tendencies and dispositions which are *alike* whenever they come into effect. On the other hand, if the sociologist is concerned with dispositions to act, it is their manifestation in *different* patterns in which he is interested, and his task is to account for differential behavior where the same disposition may be supposed to prevail. As Wallis said recently: "The circumstances under which men fight vary, conditions which stimulate sympathy in one group fail to do so in another, the paternal 'instinct' is manifested differently in various groups and in successive cultures. We wish to know why there are these specific manifestations."[2] In short, it is not the disposition itself but the factors conditioning the disposition, the sequence of stimulus and response patterns, that interest the sociologist.

[1] *L. c.*, p. 82 *et seq.*

[2] Wallis, W. D., *An Introduction to Sociology*, New York, 1927, p. 146; *cf.* also A. A. Tenney's criticism of McDougall's "Social Psychology," *Am. Jour. of Soc.*, vol. 15, 1910.

While this applies to Vierkandt's analysis of innate dispositions (two extracts of which we have given above), the same can be said with regard to his analysis of social relations. Here, too, we find the emphasis upon mental processes, "inner" life and so forth, but little that is of sociological significance.

For purposes of illustration, we may refer to two phases of his analysis with which he is primarily concerned.

1. Phenomenology discovers that all social relations give an inner stimulation to the individuals who participate in them, promoting and furthering their inner life. This Vierkandt calls "*innere Foerderung*" (inner furtherance), and according to him the possibility of its realization through a given social relationship is one of the conditions for its establishment.[1] It means that individuals enter into relations not only for external advantages (*aussere Foerderung*) but also in expectation of inner experiences. One's weakness, or the inability to perform a necessary task by oneself, may lead to the establishment of a close union (*Gemeinschaft*) with others. But this may also be done for the sake of the inner stimulation which is promised by an association with a person from whom one may expect understanding and sympathetic response.[2] Similarly, while the other types of systematic relations — dominance, mutual recognition and conflict—are enacted in order to further material interests, they also offer inner stimulation such as the satisfaction of being able to dominate, or that one's power is recognized, or that one has triumphed over an adversary. The inner bond that all relations offer in various degrees also may act as an incentive.[3] A phenomenological analysis shows, according

[1] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 287.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 280.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 285.

to Vierkandt, that the inner stimulation is due to specific qualities of experience which each type of relationship offers. *Gemeinschaft* means surrender to a whole, to something of greater value than oneself, which carries with it "the entrancing feeling of the widening of one's ego".[1] Or in conflict, it is the exhilaration that the exertion of one's powers brings and the pleasurable feeling of performing something.[2]

We may point out that inner stimulation is a purely subjective experience not bound to the relations, since it may or may not be present without affecting in any way the mode of behavior that is characteristic for the given relation. Inner stimulation does not explain why there are different types of social relations, since it is qualitatively the same in different relations. Social relations, however, are determined by the prevailing social and cultural conditions and they will differ in structure and in function wherever the conditions differ. Inner stimulation may or may not accompany the relation; but for sociological analysis, the differentiation in structure and the function in a given social situation are objects of investigation. That consideration of the conditions in which relations are enacted is of primary importance rather than inner stimulation is implicitly recognized by Vierkandt himself when, in another connection, he says that "social relations follow with inexorable, factual consistency from the circumstances of social life".[3]

2. Phenomenology attempts to determine the inner aspect of social relations.[4] Vierkandt considers the most important achievement of the phenomenological approach to be the discovery of the fact that an inner bond of union is a constitu-

[1] *L. c.*, p. 287.
[2] *L. c.*, p. 288.
[3] *L. c.*, p. 52.
[4] *L. c.*, p. 180.

tive part of all social relations, "at least in the background, in some quiet corner of the mind".[1] An exception only makes pure factual relations (*Sachverhaeltnisse*) in which another individual is not treated as a human being, as, for instance in slavery that has no patriarchal character, or in an unmitigated use of force that aims at annihilation.[2]

The recognition of the universality of the inner bond in human intercourse, Vierkandt considers a "Galilean" discovery of his own.[3]

According to Vierkandt, the inner bond (*innere Verbundenheit*) is most pronounced in primary group relations (*Gemeinschaftsverhaeltniss*). It rests upon the consciousness of union of which the phenomenologically discovered mental experience is: "I benefit by everybody's activities, everybody benefits by my own action, and to this extent we are one."[4] It presupposes awareness of likemindedness which is associated with the feeling of belonging together; furthermore, the consciousness of being bound to and dependent upon others innerly creates a characteristic feeling of homeliness, such as the feeling of security, of solidarity, of familiarity and of the sensation of an expanded ego that includes the group.[5]

In other social relations, the basis of the inner bond is the regulation of activities that is present in all relations.[6] The inner bond here expresses itself in the mutual recognition of norms and values.[7] Regulation, which characterizes social life, results from the fact that the demands of the group

[1] *L. c.*, p. 275.
[2] *L. c.*, p. 231.
[3] *L. c.*, p. 4 and note 2.
[4] *L. c.*, p. 207 *et seq.*
[5] *L. c.*, p. 210 *et seq.*
[6] *L. c.*, p. 264.
[7] *L. c.*, p. 272.

impose upon inborn imperative motives which in turn control the impulsive motives.[1]

Historically Vierkandt recognizes that regulation, norms and customs originate in the primary group, because it is there that the dependence of the individual upon the group most readily leads to the recognition of stable forms and discipline. It is also in primary groups where regard for others develops.[2] Phenomenologically, however, "all human intercourse by nature aims at regulation rather than force".[3]

A phenomenological analysis furthermore shows that *Gemeinschaft* prevails in the three other fundamental relations. In relations based upon agreement (*Anerkennungsverhaeltnisse*), there are, on the one hand, the disposition to keep the contract and, on the other, the belief that the norms of the contract will be complied with. This presupposes (phenomenologically revealed) an inner bond and the mutual sharing of the same inner dispositions between two parties.[4] In a conflict relation this inner bond is found in the fact that the struggle is conducted according to definite rules which presupposes moral community. Furthermore, all opposition takes place only because the opponents feel that in some way they are innerly connected.[5]

Relations based upon dominance (*Machtverhaeltnisse*), since they rest upon the recognition of the right to dominate also presuppose a bond of inner dependence.[6] Obedience is based upon the desire to support the one who issues the command. Class dominance rests upon inner recognition of

[1] *L. c.*, p. 249.
[2] *L. c.*, p. 274.
[3] *L. c.*, p. 252.
[4] *L. c.*, pp. 265 *et seq.*
[5] *L. c.*, pp. 269 *et seq.*
[6] *L. c.*, pp. 272 *et seq.*

superiority and the will for subordination, and it implies the recognition of a differentiated system of values in which subordinate positions are accepted as a matter of course. Thus phenomenology shows the presence of an inner bond, a degree of *Gemeinschaft,* in all social relations.

The argument may be raised particularly in connection with the last example, that while the phenomenological method may have little application in sociological analysis, its results notwithstanding constitute a body of sociological knowledge of equal value and significance to that which is derived from any other procedure. For this reason the products of a phenomenological analysis may be considered an addition to sociological knowledge and their incorporation into sociology may mean a desirable extension of its field.

This is an argument that Vierkandt uses in defense of the sociological significance of the formal procedure. He recognizes clearly that a definition of sociology as the fundamental social science dealing with "elements and principles" of social life does not necessarily require the application of the phenomenological method in order to accomplish its task. He points out that the important questions as to the concrete manifestations of the fundamental processes in historical forms, their distribution, frequency of occurrence, their dependence upon particular conditions, and the situations that they in turn bring about, can only be solved by the application of the method of observation and induction.[1] But the nature of the fundamental social phenomena, "the essence of society, of social behavior and social relations as such"[2] can be discovered only by means of the phenomenological method. Vierkandt proposes that the theory of social categories be considered *pure sociology* and the study of social occurrences in their concrete manifestation an application

[1] *L. c.*, p. 15.

[2] *Ibid.*

of its results. Thus both the phenomenological and the inductive-empirical approach are to find their place side by side within the confines of sociology with the implication that formal sociology is the kernel of sociology and all specialized research an application of the principles and facts laid down by it.[1]

The implicit assumption of this position is that the results of a phenomenological analysis are of scientific validity. Vierkandt would insist that the inductive method cannot alone claim to be scientific and that the phenomenological method is scientific in the same sense.[2] In fact, the phenomenological method, according to him, has this advantage over the inductive method: it arrives at judgments of absolute certainty and validity, whereas the inductive method discovers only probabilities. But it is difficult to see how the scientific validity of the phenomenological method can be maintained. Its claim for absolute certainty alone is unscientific. It furthermore rests upon the assumption of a "pure ego" which is a metaphysical postulate. It implies uniformity of mental life that cannot be proved. Its criterion—the inner evidence—is only a subjective test, which unjustifiably claims objectivity. Its judgments, which are arrived at through contemplation of the nature of "things", are not susceptible of proof. Thus, if a statement made by the phenomenologist is not accepted as "evident" by another person, the phenomenologist can only accuse his opponent of inaccurate contemplation but has no means whereby to convince him of the validity of his assertion. It is evident, therefore, that if sociology is to be a science, the phenomenological method has no place within its realm. Neither can the results of phenomenological analysis be combined with the results of empirical investigation to form the body of

[1] *Jahrbuch f. Soziologie*, p. 82.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

sociological knowledge. Sociology cannot be a phenomenology of society and an empirical science at the same time. A body of scientific knowledge cannot include side by side theses that are derived by opposite methods. The results of the "perception of essences" is inacceptable to the empiricist who cannot test these results by scientific methods and, as Husserl says, "the empirical discoveries are irrelevant to phenomenology since a phenomenological reduction has to exclude all judgments about empirical reality".[1]

Furthermore, the results achieved by the application of both methods may be contradictory. That statements arrived at phenomenologically may contradict the results of empirical and experimental investigations can be shown in connection with certain claims Vierkandt has made in his "*Gesellschaftlehre*".

Vierkandt asserts that by applying the phenomenological approach, he has been able to discover "ultimate, aprioristic facts" upon which social life is based. These are inborn, plastic dispositions which are purely formal in character.[2] Such dispositions are: the instinct of self-abasement, the impulse to fondle and help, the impulse to fight, sympathy, imitation, suggestion, the instinct for sociability, the tendency to assist one another which is the basis of solidarity,[3] the disposition to trust, and others. For most of these dispositions, Vierkandt's authority is McDougall.[4] And, like McDougall, he considers these dispositions inborn, for the reason that they fulfil a purpose, since "in the last analysis everything purposeful in social life must be reducible to inborn dispositions and their unfolding".[5] But Vierkandt has

[1] *L. c.*, p. 57.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 23.

[3] *L. c.*, pp. 184, 280.

[4] *Social Psychology*, New York, 1924.

[5] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 199.

an additional reason to assume the inborn character of the dispositions. They are inborn because they are immediately given in experience, are susceptible to phenomenological analysis and, therefore, must be original qualities of the human mind.[1] Thus it is disclosed phenomenologically that the particular qualities which the dispositions represent cannot be reduced to simpler qualities. They are final elements of experience which constitute the ultimate nature of the human mind and are recognized as such on perfect evidence.

In this case, where innateness of certain dispositions is claimed on the basis of "inner evidence", it is shown clearly how phenomenology, in precluding the results of empirical investigations, may arrive at conclusions which contradict experimentally ascertainable facts, since in view of recent experimentations in psychology (Watson, Allport[2]) it is exceedingly doubtful whether any of the dispositions mentioned by Vierkandt are inborn.

It is significant to note in this connection that Vierkandt himself has clearly recognized the importance of the process of conditioning to which he refers whenever his analysis is not phenomenological. Thus he appears a thoroughgoing environmentalist wherever he has occasion to draw upon his researches in culture history. He takes the position that there is no such thing as a constant human nature in terms of which social occurrences can be explained.[3] In rejecting a "blue-print" of psychological properties, he declares the conception of a "natural man" to be a fiction, and substitutes in its stead the "historical man" whom he calls a product of the social and cultural environment which conditions his behavior.[4] Vierkandt has even gone so far as to

[1] *L. c.*, p. 58.

[2] Watson, J. B., *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist*; Allport, F., *Social Psychology.*

[3] *Gesellschaftslehre,* chaps. i, iv, vi.

[4] *Ibid.*

take a position very similar to that of Rivers with regard to the relation of psychology and sociology. He claims that in a sociological investigation "to assume at the start specific psychological qualities carries the danger that important explanatory possibilities may be overlooked and open such investigation to the charge of dogmatism.[1]

Again, in another connection, Vierkandt refers to the dependence of all mental life and, therefore, of individual behavior upon the situation, which is thus recognized as the conditioning factor of human action. In fact, he declares that "the unit in social events is not the individual but the situation",[2] and since among the situations the relations in which the individual finds himself are the most important, he also says that "the unit for sociological thinking is not the personality but the relation between human beings".

A similar discrepancy between the results of a phenomenological analysis and an inductive procedure can be seen in connection with the question of the origin of the fundamental social relations, which Vierkandt has raised. As has been pointed out previously, Vierkandt distinguishes four types of fundamental relations: relation through *Gemeinschaft,* through conflict, through agreement and through dominance.[3] On the one hand, Vierkandt asserts that these

[1] *L. c.*, p. 13.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 345.

[3] The last three relations Vierkandt calls "Gesellschaft," distinguished from "Gemeinschaft" by the fact that they are "cooler" (p. 239). It can be seen that Vierkandt has taken Toennies' fundamental distinction as the basis for his systematization of social relations. But Vierkandt believes that the phenomenological method enabled him to advance beyond Toennies. He claims that what Toennies initiated with the discovery of "Gesellschaft" and "Gemeinschaft" as the fundamental forms of social life, he has brought to a logical conclusion (p. 111).— The validity of Toennies' dichotomy is today generally recognized by German sociologists and frequently made the basis of sociological analysis. *Cf.* Koelner, *Viertelsjahrhefte f. Soziol.*, vol. v; Rumpf, Max, Schmoller's Jahrbuecher etc., vol. 49; Studinger, F., *Kulturgrundlagen der Politik*, vol. i, Jena, 1914.

relations are inborn responses (*Grundhaltungen*[1]). This is the conclusion reached by the phenomenological method which in analyzing the relations discovers that they are irreducible ultimate elements.

In another connection he states that the relations are based upon the social instincts, since "they enable the instincts to become active and thus satisfy their functional urge".[2]

Then again, Vierkandt points out that circumstantial pressure or factual conditions are the source of social relations, a conclusion arrived at through empirical investigation.[3] The result of a phenomenological analysis is thus found to be contradicted by Vierkandt himself.

From all that has been said, it is now apparent that the phenomenological method cannot vindicate the postulation of sociology as a "formal science". We must conclude, therefore, that Simmel's theory which Vierkandt attempted to justify by basing it upon the phenomenological method, cannot serve as a point of departure for the establishment and justification of sociology. It leads to a phenomenology of society and accordingly makes sociology a philosophical and speculative discipline, but never a science.

### 5. *The nature of the group*

In addition to taking it as a justification of a formal sociology, Vierkandt has ascribed to his introduction of the phenomenological method the importance of being the first step towards the overcoming of positivism in sociology.[4] From the preceding it has become apparent that this "overcoming" does not create a new basis for sociology as a

[1] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 59.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 287.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 52.

[4] "Die Ueberwindung des Positivismus," *Jahrbuch f. Soziol.*, vol. xi, 1920.

science, nor can it be said to advance its cause. The alternative of positivism is idealism. Return to idealism is a return to Hegel and the romantics. While Vierkandt does not view this with apprehension, judging from his acclaim of Hegel's logic,[1] yet it would mean a retardation of the forward strides which sociology has made from the time it has taken the methods and criteria of the sciences as its guide.

Wherever possible, Vierkandt attempts to substitute for an empirical, positivistic point of view a position that is more in accord with an idealistic interpretation. This he has done with regard to the question of the nature of the group which, he claims, positivism can only present in a distorted perspective. It will be interesting to inquire to what extent Vierkandt has succeeded in giving a non-positivistic interpretation of the group.

According to Vierkandt, positivism attempts to account for group properties by deriving them from the properties of the individuals who compose it. Positivism propounds the "additive point of view", and consequently considers the group an aggregate of individuals and a summation of their properties. This point of view does not, according to Vierkandt, adequately account for the peculiar characteristics which the group possesses. The group is more than the mere sum of individuals that compose it. It develops new properties in its members, it creates a set of objective forces that are external to the individuals and exercise a constraining influence upon them. These forces emanate from the group as a whole, and do not result from the personality of the individuals.[2] The nature of the group consists in "something that is present, as it were, between individuals in an inter-individual life".[3] The group possesses a spirit of its own

[1] *L. c.*, p. 66.

[2] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 450.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 346.

that forces individuals to think, feel, and act in a definite way; it is self-conscious,[1] manifests a "life urge",[2] a life organization,[3] and in many respects acts as a person.[4] The group is, therefore, a whole, a unity, and has all the properties of an individual organism.[5] This unit "forms a system of forces and relations which rests upon itself and draws individuals into its orbit. The group forms a whole in the sense of an organic unity; it excels a mere aggregate by its fixed forms, forces, and relations which adhere to it in spite of the coming and going of individuals. The group is not put together by the adding of individuals. . . . The individuals are formed within the group and are significant primarily as the carriers of objective relations and forces. The group can be compared with a stream that in spite of changes in its content, persists in its form, and in this form possesses a moulding power." [6]

Instead of the positivistic point of view, which Vierkandt considers inadequate, he proposes that the point of view of the new theory of "wholes" (*Ganzheiten*) be accepted. This theory has recently come into vogue in German philosophy and spread to other fields. The "*Gestalt*" theory is an instance of the general theory of wholes. In philosophy the theory of *Ganzheiten* is represented by W. Dilthey,[7] Eduard Spranger,[8] Max Scheler,[9] Hans Driesch,[10] and others;

[1] *L. c.*, p. 366.
[2] *L. c.*, p. 371.
[3] *L. c.*, p. 380.
[4] *L. c.*, p. 385.
[5] *L. c.*, pp. 39, 58.
[6] *L. c.*, p. 348.
[7] *Gesammelte Schriften*, vols. i, v.
[8] *Lebensformen*, Halle, 1922.
[9] *Die transzendentale und psychologische Methode*, Leipsic, 1922.
[10] *Ordungslehre*, Leipsic, 1909.

in psychology by F. Krueger,[1] M. Wertheimer[2] (*et al.*); in history by E. Troeltsch. According to this theory, in anything that is a composite, the parts do not determine the whole, but the whole determines its parts. Every composite thing has its own individuality that cannot be deduced from general rules; it is not merely a specimen of a kind but something unique and singular which conforms to laws of its own.[4]

It is evident that this theory of the individuality and unity of a composite thing (whole), if applied to the group leads logically to the assumption of some super-mind, a super-individual personality of the group, a conclusion which Hegel, for example, has drawn, and which has led him to postulate a *Volksgeist* that carries on the life of a nation, and through which divinity unfolds itself in history.

But in spite of his acceptance of the theory of *Ganzheiten*, Vierkandt does not draw this conclusion.[5] At the start we find, therefore, adherence on his part to the positivistic point of view. This adherence is further emphasized by his interpretation of other characteristics of group life.

Thus the external and constraining force that the group exercizes, Vierkandt explains by the fact that members of the group at any given moment are divided into "actors" and "spectators". The spectators watch and control the

[1] *Gestaltcomplexe und Gestaltgefuhle*, Leipsic, 1926.

[2] Wertheimer, M. See also Ehrenfels, *Viertelahrsschr. f. wissenschaftliche Philosophie*, vol. xiv, p. 249; Koffka, K., "Perception: an Introduction to the Gestalt-Theorie," *Psychol. Bull.*, 1922, vol. xix, pp. 531-585; Koehler, W., *Die physischen Gestalten in Ruhe und in stationaeren Zustand*, 1920; Rubin, E., *Visuell wahrgenommene Figuren*, 1921.

[3] "Der Historismus und seine Probleme," *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. iii, Tuebingen, 1922.

[4] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 111.

[5] *L. c.*, pp. 49, 356. He is what Karl Pribram has called a "pseudo-realist," *Koeln. Vier. hefte f. Soziologie*, vol. v, p. 3.

actions of the active members of the group who thus feel themselves constrained to follow the requirements that the common rules and the traditions of the group impose upon them. The group, therefore, is in reality the spectators and the will of the group is the will of the spectators.[1] Conformity of the actors and their willingness to follow the folkways and mores of the group is due to the change of roles to which every group is subjected. He is actor at one time and spectator at another, and therefore is willing to follow the folkways and mores of the group which he himself wants to see enforced and respected by others.

Of the "group-spirit", Vierkandt says that it embodies the ideas, attitudes, and values that are common possessions of the mind of the many. It is external to each particular individual, because it is not the product of his own mind but the result of interaction between individuals and of interaction between them and the prevailing circumstances.[2]

Group self-consciousness is, according to Vierkandt, the result of awareness on the part of each individual of the group that there is an inner bond which unites him to others. Every member of the group is conscious of belonging to a whole of which he considers himself an integral part, and this consciousness is intensified by common possessions, opposition to other groups, uniformity of behavior within the group, and particularly by the fact that he performs a function within the group.[3]

Group-consciousness is, therefore, the consciousness of individual members of the group concerning common interests and purposes.[4]

Likewise, the life-urge of the group Vierkandt interprets

[1] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 395.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 347.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 368.

[4] *L. c.*, p. 380.

in terms of individual desires to maintain intact the group to which they belong. He says: "The collective life-urge dies out when the group ceases to mean anything more to the individuals, i. e., when it does not offer them an opportunity for the realization of values." [1]

The "objectivity of the group" is interpreted by Vierkandt as the constancy of functions of collective representations, which are independent of any particular individual, since they are shared by many, and thus appear as a uniform causal and purposeful system.[2] But this independence or objectivity Vierkandt recognizes is only relative,[3] as there are always different degrees of objectivity discernible in different groups.

It can be seen that Vierkandt's interpretation of group characteristics is in terms of "the mind of the many" [4] that are the outgrowth of interaction, of mutual dependence and common interests. In view of this, it is difficult to see why Vierkandt should have considered his interpretation to be anti-positivistic. His conclusion in no way differs from the results achieved by "positivistic" investigators. In fact, he has throughout maintained the main theses of positivism. For example, the group characteristics and the life-urge are interpreted additively as the sum of individual attitudes with regard to their collective state of living. Since "all group qualities are experiences of individuals",[5] it is evidently the summation and coordination of these experiences that make a group. Vierkandt's opposition to positivism does not really concern positivism itself, but the incompleteness of the thesis

[1] *L. c.*, p. 379.

[2] *L. c.*, p. 357.

[3] *L. c.*, p. 401.

[4] Giddings, F. H., *Studies in the Theory of Human Society*, New York, 1922, p. 235.

[5] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 351.

advanced by some positivists that the group is merely the sum of individuals, whereas it actually is the totality of like behavior-patterns and like states of mind of individuals. It is inaccurate to claim, as Vierkandt does, that the conception of the group as a unity is anti-positivistic so long as this unity is conceived, as he himself suggests, as a functional unity, meaning that many act and think alike and therefore function as if they were one. Similarly, "objectivity" of the group is not anti-positivistic if by it is meant the objectivity of folkways, mores or in short the social heritage.

Instead of being opposed to positivism, Vierkandt, we find, conforms to its main thesis. The inconsistency in which he becomes involved shows that in connection with the problem of the nature of the group, he was not successful in maintaining the claim for the introduction of a new methodological approach.

We may conclude, therefore, that to a large degree Vierkandt's contribution to the methodology of sociology is negative. He has indicated the way in which sociology may not go and, for that matter, need not go if it is to be a science.

# CHAPTER III

## The Behavioristic Sociology of Leopold von Wiese

### INTRODUCTION

In contrast to Vierkandt who took Simmel's theoretical argumentations as the basis of his sociological system, the point of departure of v. Wiese is closely akin to the position which Simmel adopted in his writings. There, as we have shown, the object of investigation was concrete social situations and the analysis of social processes with regard to their component elements and the circumstantial factors by which they are conditioned. v. Wiese has likewise taken the actual occurrences of interaction as the object-matter of his investigation. Simmel, however, failed to give a methodological foundation to this approach. In v. Wiese's writings, on the contrary, the methodological interest predominates. They are concerned foremost with the systematization and organization of sociologically relevant phenomena, taken in their concrete manifestations.

In his works v. Wiese, like Vierkandt, has been influenced by other writers than Simmel. But, whereas Vierkandt's authorities were predominantly German writers, v. Wiese was influenced by American and French sociologists, admittedly by E. A. Ross and M. Waxweiler.[1] His early interest in Herbert Spencer to whom he devoted his first literary effort [2] may have been instrumental in determining v. Wiese's leaning towards Western ideas. It is not surprising, therefore, that his sociological system is more in accord with prevailing trends of sociological thought in

[1] "Allgemeine Sociologie," vol. i, *Beziehungslehre*; Munich, 1924, p. viii.

[2] *Die Grundlagen d. Gesellschaftslehre*, Jena, 1906.

America than it is with the trends in Germany. This is shown most strikingly by the fact that, in contrast to leading German sociologists, he considers it of fundamental importance for sociology to proceed behavioristically, abandon introspective and phenomenological methods, avoid evaluations, and employ quantitative methods.

With this thesis, v. Wiese has struck a new note in German sociology. He turned against the prevailing tendency toward conceptual analysis and philosophical argumentation in contrast to which he adopted an approach that avoids the quandary of current epistemological and generally theoretical discussion and emphasizes the scientific study and systematization of concrete occurrences. v. Wiese's position is also a deliberate challenge to that host of German writers on sociological subjects who aim at evaluation rather than scrutiny of facts, or who attempt to deduce a metaphysical meaning of social phenomena by interpreting their cosmic significance.[1] Evaluation and interpretation of meaning are rigidly excluded by him from the confines of sociology proper. Finally, in meeting the current opinion that the social sciences have different presuppositions and require different methods of analysis from those of the natural sciences, v. Wiese asserts that the methods of the natural sciences should be adopted in sociology if it is to attain the status of a science. Indeed, he regards as a "most undesirable departure" the change from the esteem of the natural sciences which was prevalent in the second half of the nineteenth century to the present "superciliousness of a highly obscure and presumptuous idealism",[2] which is conspicuous in German philosophical thinking of today.

The emphasis upon the rather unique position which v. Wiese occupies among German sociologists should not pre-

[1] For example: Max Scheler, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft.*

[2] *All. Soz.*, p. 40.

vent the recognition of the fact that a number of points of similarity united him with both Simmel and Vierkandt.[1] First of all, he accepts the general proposition of both writers that sociology is to be a special science having its own limited field of investigation. Secondly, he shares with them an essentially relativistic and functional interpretation of social phenomena. *"Beziehung"*, as interrelation or interaction, is the central and unifying category in the sociological "systems" of Simmel and Vierkandt as well as of v. Wiese. The result of this is that in spite of many significant differences in respect to *task* and methods of approach, all three writers interpret alike the nature of society. Indeed the significance which they attach to the concept *"Beziehung"* permits us to speak of them as representing a distinct school of sociological thought in Germany.

The relativistic interpretation of society was first expressed by Simmel in his *"Soziale Differenzierung"*. It is still more pronounced in Vierkandt's *"Gesellschaftslehre"*. When he defines society as "a whole in which the parts are in characteristic relations to each other",[2] the relations are regarded as constituting the essence of society. In his interpretation the category of "object" is disposed of and all societal facts are reduced to functions. Relations thus achieve a reality of their own—independent of the individuals or groups among whom they are established; they mould the individual and act therefore as extraneous forces.[3] The

[1] An unconvincing attempt to show a far-reaching similarity as to fundamentals in the position of Vierkandt and v. Wiese has recently been made by Max Rumpf in Schmoller's *Jahrbücher*, vol. 59.

v. Wiese, himself, has sharply emphasized his disagreement with the essentials of Vierkandt's position in a review of Vierkandt's "Gesellschaftslehre," *Koeln. Viertelsjahrhefte f. Soz.*, vol. iii, p. 167.

[2] *Gesselschaftslehre*, p. 47.

[3] This point had been particularly emphasized by Durkheim, who was among the first to elaborate its significance for the theory of sociology, *cf. Les Regles de la méthode sociologique, passim.*

multiplciity of relations into which an individual can enter suggests to Vierkandt that the individual may be considered merely as a necessary but otherwise inconsequential substratum, while the significant factor is his function or activity relative to a given situation. This leads him therefore to the abrogation of the conception of a "unity of personality" and the explanation of behavior in terms of individual properties. The different relations determine the different attitudes and behavior-patterns and corresponding situations call them forth "practically independent of the personality of the individuals involved".[1]

Similarly for v. Wiese all human behavior is determined by social relations. He is careful to admit that "it would be wrong to assume that all phenomena of individual and collective life can be interpreted solely in terms of relations. . . . Certain feelings, thoughts and desires of individuals, as well as the collective forces represented by religion, art, science and the ethos, cannot be fully explained by the means which are at the disposal of the sociologist."[2] The means to which v. Wiese here refers are those that are derived from a knowledge of the nature and function of social relations. To v. Wiese the sociological point of view is thus identical with interpretation in terms of relations. He recognizes a limitation of the extent to which this point of view is applicable. But even this limitation he regards as only a temporary one. It appears to him that "from a consistent study based upon comparison and observation narrowing down in favor of the social",[3] most of what has once been regarded as purely philosophical, æsthetic, ethical and logical in nature is now conceived as the product of social relations. "There remains an infinitely small residue unexplainable sociologically . . .

[1] *Gesellschaftslehre*, p. 51.

[2] *All. Soz.*, p. 7.

[3] *Ibid.*

which, however, is constantly attacked by sociology and exposed to the projectiles of the sociological method." [1]

We find, thus, that v. Wiese is in essential agreement with Simmel and Vierkandt on the propositions that sociology is to be conceived as the science of social relations and that social reality is to be interpreted in terms of these relations. On the other hand, he differs from *both* in respect to methodology; first, with regard to the approach to the study of social relations and interactions; and, secondly, with reference to the conception of the tasks to be accomplished thereby.

According to Simmel the study of interaction is to proceed by means of a structural analysis of social occurrences in order to discover the forms which they enact. These forms are then to be classified and interpreted psychologically and their historical development is then to be traced.

To Vierkandt the task of sociology is to discover the ultimate facts, relations and forms which are the basis of all social life, and, as a matter of procedure, analyze them phenomenologically.

v. Wiese's conception of the approach to the study of social relations and of the tasks of sociology ensuing therefrom is opposed to both these positions. To its detailed analysis we shall turn now.

### I. V. WIESE'S APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

In contrast to Simmel, v. Wiese does not emphasize the form-aspects of social relations but is concerned with the action-patterns which they manifest. Not form but "energy, action, the manifestation of force, becoming",[2] are to him of primary importance. He wants everything static reduced to "movement, kinetics and occurrence".[3]

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

[3] *Ibid.*

Since this requires concentration upon the actual and concrete manifestatoin of behavior in social life, " the ultimate facts, forms and forces ", in contrast to Vierkandt, are also put into the background. Sociology becomes the study of actions and processes as the constituent factors of social reality.

The behavior with which sociology is concerned is, according to v. Wiese, of a specific character. He restricts the sociologically relevant to a definite type of activities in accordance with his position that sociology is a special, limited science and does not have the whole field of societal happenings as its object.

This sociologically relevant behavior is, to v. Wiese, the actions of individuals and groups directed towards, or having reference to, other individuals and groups as objects of these activities. He says that " this part of human behavior is of interest to sociology which consists of human actions with regard to other human beings ".[1] Therefore, " wherever observable behavior is influenced by human beings we have a fact that is sociologically relevant ".[2] Accordingly, " we must separate man's connection with nature from his connection with his fellowmen " [3] and be concerned " only with behavior as directed towards, and influenced by, human beings ".[4] The individual is to be considered only in so far " as he approaches or withdraws from others ".[5]

### 1. *The Social Process and Social Relations*

The actions, thus characterized, v. Wiese calls social processes. He adopts the term " process " because he considers that this term conveys most adequately " the dominant character of social life which is occurrence (*Geschehen*) and

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 33.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 95.
[3] P. 2. [4] P. 1. [5] P. 14.

action (*Handlung*)".[1] In his sociological system social processes are of central importance. Like Ross, v. Wiese takes them as his units of investigation,[2] but going further than Ross, he declares them to be true sociological elements.[3] He believes that all complex social occurrences are composed of social processes and that, therefore, they are not only by themselves objects of investigation (as does Ross) but the things to be searched for whenever sociological analysis of a situation is attempted.[4]

In view of the importance that v. Wiese attaches to social processes, as distinguished from social relations, it is necessary to discuss the connection which exists between the two, even though the distinction between them is not clearly drawn by him. Indeed, in many cases "relation" and "process" are used alternately [5] and his own system is called by him the theory of social relations as well as the theory of social processes.

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 41. An equivalent for "process" in v. Wiese's use of the term, is the term "action-pattern" suggested by F. H. Giddings in his "Scientific Study of Human Society."

[2] *All. Soz.*, p. 36.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

[4] This interpretation distinguishes v. Wiese's conception of the social process from that of Oppenheimer (*System d. Soz.*, vol. i). According to Oppenheimer, society is one great process embodying the innumerable activities of which social life is constituted. But to make the social process thus defined the object of investigaion would make of sociology a general social science which has the totality of human life as material for generalization. v. Wiese's restriction of the term to action-patterns that establish social relations is, therefore, more consistent with the conception of sociology as a special science.

The action-patterns (social processes) according to v. Wiese are concrete, observable facts which "depend upon space, time, the law of physics and the material and organic regulations of the surrounding world." (*All. Soz.*, p. 14.) Social processes are natural processes and as such are objective, as, for example, "to congregate".

[5] For example, *cf.* in his *All. Soz.*, pp. 18, 27, 121.

The connection between relation and process v. Wiese has expressed in two conflicting statements. On the one hand, he regards social relations as representing the concrete situations which the sociologists investigate by studying the actions which bring about the relations. Since these "actions" are the social processes, the implied connection here is that processes establish social relations. Therefore, it is not really relations but social processes that are the sociologists' object, because "should we be interested in relations alone it would little matter to us whether these relations are brought forth by the actions of human beings, by mechanical forces or by chemical processes."[1] On the other hand, v. Wiese defines social processes as "relations through actions",[2] the implied connection here being that processes constitute but one of many diverse types of relations.

These two statements are obviously inconsistent with each other. The first statement implies an ontological difference between process and relation, while the second identifies the social process with a particular form of relations. Furthermore, the first statement makes the process the primary occurrence from which relations follow, while the second presupposes relations as primary occurrences. But this apparent inconsistency is explained by the fact that v. Wiese applied the term "relation" to two different phenomena without clearly drawing the line of distinction.

"Relation" is first used by v. Wiese to describe the situation where two or more individuals interact on the basis of some kind of adjustment, i. e., where a fixation of sequences of action-patterns takes place that may be more or less permanent. v. Wiese has defined this type of relation rather vaguely as "the occurrence in which two or more magnitudes become connected in such manner that each preserves

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 24.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

its integrity (*als selbstaendige Groesse bestehen bleibt*) but at the same time undergoes changes that call forth partial agreement and community in particulars.[1] In this sense, the term "relation" is used by v. Wiese to designate, for example, the institution of "Kula" among the Melanesians which Malinowski described in his "Argonauts of the Pacific".[2] It is to this type of relation, resulting from action-patterns and maintained by them, that v. Wiese's first statement—that social processes establish relations—applies.

In the second place, v. Wiese uses the term "relation" to designate the relative position which individuals occupy with regard to each other. Since this position is determined by the direction of movement of individuals towards each other and since the direction is either one of approach or of withdrawal, there are three fundamental "relations" which constitute this second type: relations of approach, or of withdrawal, or a combination of both. These relations, according to v. Wiese, are manifested in the social processes. A social process is always an expression of one of the three fundamental relations. "Relation", therefore, in the sense of relative position, is what specifically characterizes social processes.

This conception of relation is in accord with v. Wiese's second statement, since a social process, in so far as it puts into effect a relation of approach or of withdrawal, may be said to be a relation through action. In v. Wiese's sociological system only this conception is important. We may say, therefore, that according to v. Wiese the relevant connection existing between process and relation is that social processes are expressions of the relative position (relation) in which individuals or groups find themselves in the course of reciprocal action upon each other. From this point of view,

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *All. Soz.*, p. 43.

the search for relations at the same time becomes the search for social processes, and vice versa.

### 2. *The "Specificum Sociologicum".*

Having once adopted the social process as the unit of sociological investigation, v. Wiese proceeded to search for an organizing principle which would enable its systematic treatment.

v. Wiese considers it necessary to win a point of vantage from which the infinite complexity and interdependence of social occurrences can be viewed and organized. He believes this to be possible and compares social life with a carpet woven out of numerous multicolored threads which, in spite of their diversity, possess definite pattern.[1] Once this pattern is discovered, sociological investigation can be conducted with reference to it.

The determination of the pattern involves necessarily a generalizing procedure. The possibility of such a procedure depends, according to v. Wiese, upon the feasibility of organizing social phenomena along a few clearly discernible lines. He believes that along these "lines" social phenomena can be reduced to quantitative differences in spite of their intricacy and qualitative character.

An organizing principle which v. Wiese derives from the observation already referred to, is that all social processes express two simple, general "lines of movement".[2] All social processes are either, (1) actions of approach towards others and, in the case of union, action with others; or, (2) actions of withdrawal and opposition which, in the case of separation, establishes isolation All social processes can, therefore, be interpreted in terms of two elemental occurrences: association and dissociation, whereby the aspects of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

behavior which are specifically sociological pertain to approach and union, on the one hand, and avoidance, opposition, and isolation on the other.[1]

The validity of this statement cannot be questioned. Indeed, whenever human beings act with reference to one another, they will either maintain the relative position established through previous actions, or the position will shift and then they will either draw closer or draw further apart.

The two elemental lines of movement that v. Wiese discerns in all social phenomena are fundamental for magnitudes of all kinds. Taken by itself, therefore, his observation merely affirms the universal validity of a mathematical certainty. Besides, the introduction into sociology of the fundamental dichotomy of action is not a new enterprise. Spencer, in whose system the two directions appear as integration and differentiation, had used it before v. Wiese. There is only this difference between the two, that v. Wiese restricts himself to interaction whereas Spencer takes the whole field of social evolution into consideration.

Furthermore, v. Wiese emphasizes the fact that actions in both directions are constantly present in human interrelations, and that none has priority in determining social life. To v. Wiese, sociology, thus, must study the processes of dissociation and isolation as much as the processes of socialization. According to him it is " just as wrong to suppose that human beings in the course of history became more and more ' collective ' as it is to assume that the individual is becoming more and more independent ".[2]

But v. Wiese's original contribution lies in the conclusions which he draws from the existence of this dichotomy for the theory of sociology. Because it is simple, void of all content, valid for all time and every place, he accepts it as the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

[2] *All. Soz.*, p. 15.

"basic sociological scheme". It serves him first of all as the organizing principle for the systematization of social processes. Secondly, he believes that the dichotomy determines what is specifically sociological. "Everything that takes place on earth pertains to the theory of relations (i. e., sociology) only in so far as it manifests approach or withdrawal between human beings." [1]

According to v. Wiese, every complex occurrence in society is a composite of numerous aspects, and can be looked at from various points of view: ethical, economic, religious, political, etc. But the sociological aspect consists only in the association and dissociation manifested in these occurrences. The constitute the *specificum sociologicum.* And since association and dissociation appear in various degrees, he concludes that the object of sociology must be primarily the quantitative measurement of the degree of association and dissociation in social occurrences.

Such conception is to v. Wiese of double significance. First of all, the requirement of a quantitative procedure is a claim for scientific exactness and, therefore, directs the efforts of sociologists at the start towards the kind of analysis which will establish sociology as a science. Secondly, it furnishes the only basis upon which sociology can be established as a special, independent science. It offers a limited field of strictly sociological investigation. At the same time it clearly distinguishes sociology from the other social sciences.

### 3. *Sociology and the Social Sciences*

v. Wiese considers the degree of association and dissociation as the *formal* aspect of societal occurrences. The factual aspects are the purposes for which people seek or avoid each other. These purposes are only of secondary

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

importance to sociology, but they furnish, according to v. Wiese, the main distinction between sociology and the other social sciences. Sociology is interested only in the rhythm and direction of movement of the social processes, while social economics, jurisprudence, ethics, etc. are concerned with the situations that result from the realization of various purposes in action.[1]

To illustrate what v. Wiese has in mind we may take his interpretation of social economics as an example. He defines social economics as the science which deals with human actions, the purpose of which is the proper adjustment of needs to the means for their satisfaction. This science shows how this task is solved by such devices as price-fixation or co-operative organization. It also shows that certain general action-patterns, like competition, co-operation, division of labor, enter into various socio-economic situations. It is interested in these action-patterns in so far as they are means that serve to realize a definite purpose. The sociologists would be interested in the same action-patterns but from the point of view of the associative or dissociative character that they manifest. He deals with this manifestation in abstraction from everything else that is involved in the situation. The sociologist is justified in doing this, since rhythm and direction of movement are frequently the same where different purposes are active; on the other hand, the same purposes may involve different rhythm and direction of movement of the social processes.[2]

It is significant in this connection that v. Wiese recognizes that the analysis of social processes does not constitute the final task of a comprehensive sociology. Once this task is accomplished, then that which has been abstracted will have to be viewed again as a whole. Sociology, as the study

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 17.

[2] *All. Soz.*, p. 13.

of social processes, will always branch out into subdivisions like economic sociology, sociology of law, of religion, etc., where the task will be to show how social institutions arise from social processes and to explain how in turn economic, juridic, religious and other facts influence these processes.[1]

### 4. *Sociology and Psychology*

The relation between sociology and psychology v. Wiese interprets in the same way as Simmel does. In fact on this point there is unanimity of opinion among all representatives of the school of " relationists ".

Specifically, v. Wiese asserts that it never is the task of sociology to be concerned with the analysis of mental processes. He, therefore, questions the advisability of interpreting social phenomena in terms of motives, since only little or no real explanation is obtained in so doing. Psychological facts, a given tendency for example, " frequently points back to social situations. . . . Somebody's way of thinking or feeling may be determined by his membership in a particular group. Not always is the psychical primary and the social secondary." [2] While recognizing existing contacts between sociology and psychology, v. Wiese emphasizes the total dissimilarity between psychological and sociological problematizations. Thus he says: In psychology one organizes and analyzes inner, i. e., conscious, processes in sociology external groupings of individuals; but in order to interpret mental processes, social groupings have to be considered, while the analysis of groupings themselves will often have to take recourse to mental processes for explanation.[3]

v. Wiese recognizes, however, that there are border-line phenomena where the social and the psychological cannot be

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

[3] *Ibid.*

separated. In order to take care of these phenomena he proposes the accepting of Stoltenberg's classification.[1] Stoltenberg, who has made an extensive analysis of the interrelation between social and psychological phenomena,[2] has devised a hierarchy of sciences differentiated according to the emphasis put on either of the two phenomena. He distinguishes, first, *psychology,* which analyzes the states of consciousness of the individual. Secondly, *socio-psychology,* which concerns itself with the states of mind of the individual that are determined by the presence of others or through relations with others. Thirdly, *psycho-sociology,* which is synoptical in its approach, dealing with collective psychological phenomena like crowd psychology, for example. Fourthly, *sociology* which studies processes of interaction and their products without reference to psychological processes. Accordingly, the phenomena which partake of both, the psychological and sociological fields, are dealt with by socio-psychology and psycho-sociology, respectively, while psychology and sociology are concerned with groups of problems, indigenous and exclusive.

The rigid separation between psychology and sociology, to which v. Wiese adheres, is theoretically valid. Whether or not psychological and sociological data can be kept apart in actual sociological investigations still remains an open question. Thus we find that v. Wiese himself makes extensive use of psychological concepts in the analysis of social processes and in the interpretation of their function.[3] In the last analysis only comprehensive sociological studies, and not theoretical argumentation, will give the answer to this question.

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 42.

[2] *Soziopsychologie*, Berlin, 1914, and *Seelgrupplehre*, Berlin, 1922.

[3] *Cf. infra, The Analysis of Social Processes.*

Our discussion so far has concerned itself with the delimination of the field of sociology as proposed by v. Wiese. We have seen that according to him the subject-matter of sociology is social processes, conceived as the action-patterns manifested in human interrelations. These are types of interaction between individuals independent of, or within, group organizations and interactions between groups.

Accordingly, the sociological approach to the study of social relations is the discovery and isolation of the social processes which they embody and the main object the investigation of these processes.

We shall now turn our attention to the specific tasks which the study of social processes implies and to the solutions which v. Wiese offers.

## II. THE TASKS OF THE THEORY OF SOCIAL PROCESSES

The study of social processes sets a five-fold task to sociology:

1. The cataloging and description of social processes.
2. The organization of social processes into a comprehensive scheme.
3. The measurement of social processes as to frequency of occurrence, duration, degree of association or dissociation.
4. Analysis of each social process in order to determine its constituent parts and the contributing factors for its actualization.
5. Determination of the function of the social processes in the life of society.

What is v. Wiese's contribution to the solution of these tasks?

### 1. *The Description of Social Processes*

v. Wiese, in collaboration with his pupils, has worked out a list of action-patterns which are used in common parlance and in sociological treatises for the characterization of occurrences in human interaction. He has collected (and described) over five hundred terms taken from sociological writings, dictionaries, fiction, etc.[1]

The importance of such a collection (even if not complete) of prevalent action-patterns for sociological analysis, can be readily appreciated. It is evident that sociological research, in so far as it is first of all concerned with the finding of types of behavior in social situations, must make use of clearly-defined categories. This will permit objective identification and when universally applied, enable verifications and facilitate generalization. The collaboration of many sociologists will be necessary, however, to arrive at universally-accepted categories. To have pointed out this need and to have suggested a tentative list is a positive contribution.

In the description of social processes v. Wiese has failed, however, to consider the important question of the criteria for their identification. In most cases he assumes that the characteristic of a particular action-pattern is known. He, therefore, contents himself merely with pointing out the direction and degree of association or dissociation which the pattern implies, but he does not give a definition that will enable its objective identification wherever it occurs.

It would be fallacious, however, to work upon the tacit assumption that a concept, once its meaning is understood, carries unmistakable marks of identification which permit its

[1] R. Michels attempted before the war to work out a sociological dictionary with the collaboration of leading sociologists, but the war has interrupted his efforts which since have not been taken up again. Waxweiler, the Belgian sociologist, attempted a similar thing. A *lexique sociologique* constitutes an appendix to his *Esquisse d'une Sociologie.*

proper application as a matter of course. No scientific accuracy in the use of categories in sociology will be possible until this assumption is abandoned and the marks of identification themselves systematically scrutinized.

When a given complex of activities is characterized, for example, by the category, "militarization", the particular aspects of the situations for which this term stands must be clearly stated in order to avoid arbitrariness and ensure an adequate basis of comparison. It is, therefore, of primary importance that in formulating sociological categories the specific manifestations of the situations which they characterize also be clearly determined. This could best be accomplished by describing social processes in terms of the way in which they function or the effects which they produce.

v. Wiese's failure to take cognizance of this methodological necessity leaves the first task which he proposes undone in its essential parts.

### 2. *The Systematization of Social Processes*

For the purpose of organizing social processes and in order to facilitate their measurement, v. Wiese has constructed a scheme by means of which the social processes are tabulated and classified. The "table of social relations"[1] (or social processes) is built up deductively. v. Wiese proceeds with the most general division of social processes into associating and dissociating ones, called by him *basic processes* (*Grundprozesse*). The fundamental dichotomy of social activities referred to before is thus the point of departure for the systematization of social processes. Each basic process is then subdivided into more specific processes according to the degree of association or dissociation which they represent. These are called the *main processes* (*Hauptprozesse*). Under each main process are then subsumed still

[1] Appendix to the first volume of his *Allgemeine Soziologie.*

more specific processes called *sub-processes* (*Unterprozesse*). Each sub-process represents the lowest scale in the generalization of the actual, concrete acts (a word or gesture, for example,) which are called *single processes* (*Einzelprozesse*).[1]

The deductive procedure, from the most general (basic) process to the single processes over a descending scale of generality, is applied by v. Wiese to two types of social relations. He distinguishes, first, relations between persons that do not presuppose the existence of group-life. These are the characteristically human (*allgemein-menschlich*) inter-individual relations that are independent of any group-organization.[2] They are called relations of the first order. The second type are relations that take place "in, through or between groups", that is, that presuppose the existence of some form of social organization.[3] These relations are of the second order in v. Wiese's terminology.

v. Wiese's scheme, thus, represents a comprehensive attempt at a systematization of social processes according to, (1) degree of generality, (2) degree of association and dissociation, and (3) type of relation represented. These three distinctions function as principles of division of the scheme.

The first and third principles merely serve the purpose of facilitating classification, and do not carry any methodological implications.

It is different with the second principle, since upon it v. Wiese has based his approach to the measurement of social processes. It is necessary, therefore, to discuss briefly the main processes to which this principle is primarily applied, and to see in what way the degrees of association and dissociation are determined.

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 18.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 212, 122.

The basic *associating* process of the first order comprises, according to v. Wiese, four main processes: approach, adaptation, equalization, and unification. These processes represent an ascending scale of degrees of association expressed in terms of distance.

In "approach" the greatest feeling of distance prevails. It is yet only an attempt at association where the outcome is still doubtful. It represents the first step towards association,[1] a trial to draw nearer. Examples of sub-processes which fall under this main process are: approving, thinking, confiding, accepting, etc. v. Wiese distinguishes thirty-seven sub-processes that express "approach".

The next main process, "adaptation", indicates that some association is already established. It presupposes prolonged and repeated contacts and some interdependence, and indicates that A and B have drawn closer together. But this process still includes recognition of differences, while at the same time it has become possible because of the presence of a number of similarities. Adaptation may be one-sided when only A modifies his behavior; or, it may be mutual when both A and B exert influence upon each other, and both modify their behavior.[2] Examples of sub-processes (sixteen are mentioned by v. Wiese) are: to express approval, to imitate, to agree, to civilize, etc.

The process of "equalization" indicates much closer association than does adaptation. It presupposes considerable similarity of behavior, common cultural traits, community of feeling and common experiences. It is the final step towards an attempt at unification.[3] Sub-processes are: to make friendship, to enter an alliance, to participate in

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 141.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 151.

social circles, etc. (Nineteen sub-processes are distinguished by v. Wiese.)

"Unification" means, according to v. Wiese, action signifying union and cooperation.[1] It represents the highest degree of association. This process does not, however, imply complete amalgamation, as the sub-processes show that various degrees of amalgamation may express unification. The degree of amalgamation depends upon the extent to which the multiform aspects of individuality enter into the union. The stability of unification itself is dependent upon the circumstances from which it arises. It will differ according to whether these conditions are sympathy, recognition of utility or circumstantial pressure, or a mixture of various motives.[2]

The basic *dissociating* process comprises three main processes: competition, opposition and conflict. These processes, according to v. Wiese, represent an ascending scale of degrees of dissociation.

"Competition" is yet compatible with association if only for the fact that it presupposes at least community of interests. But the presence of rivalry brings forth a certain degree of separation which may at times intensify itself to a struggle for existence. With regard to the degrees of intensity in competition v. Wiese accepts Ross' formulation according to which the intensity varies with the degree of personal freedom, the extent of social change and the effectiveness of the means of selection.[3] The desire to avoid competition leads to institutionalization and other socializing and constructive processes. v. Wiese distinguishes eleven sub-processes of competition: for example, to bid higher to get ahead of somebody, rivalization, etc.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 154 *et seq.*

[2] *All. Soz.*, p. 166.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 189.

"Opposition" is dissociating to a much higher degree than competition.[1] It is still, however, compatible with association, as, for example, in the opposition between father and son, between the sexes, in parliament, etc. A strong feeling of resentment and antipathy dominates, but an actual break of relations exists only as a latent possibility. There is strong tension in relations whenever there is opposition of interests, convictions, temperaments, imaginative hostility, but still contacts may continue and the relation be maintained. There are forty-nine sub-processes mentioned by v. Wiese, such as: to protest, to neglect deliberately, to debate, to deceive, to refuse, etc.

"Conflict" is open, direct opposition, a struggle that shows the highest degree of dissociation; it is a deliberate attempt to hurt or eliminate the opponent.[2] Sub-processes under conflict are, for example: to attack, to accuse, to prostitute, to duell, etc. (twenty altogether).

The associating and dissociating processes of the second order of relations, which are called by v. Wiese integrating-constructive and differentiating-destructive, respectively,[3] have main processes which are not distinguished by him on the basis of gradation.[4] They are, in the first group: uniformizing, sub- and superordination, socialization, institutionalization, professionalization and liberation; in the second: disparity, domination, stratification, selection, individuation, exploitation, corruption, formalism, commercialization, radicalization, perversion.[5]

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 193 *et seq.*

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 204 *et seq.*

[3] *All. Soz.*, p. 255.

[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

[5] v. Wiese's discrimination of main processes shows most strikingly the influence of E. A. Ross. He follows consistently the terminology adopted by Ross in his *Principles of Sociology*.

v. Wiese considers the above-outlined distinction of degrees of association and dissociation to represent a quantification of social processes.[1] This proposition, however, is untenable in view of the fact that the essential requirements of quantification are not maintained. Obviously, differences between two magnitudes are quantitative only if they can be expressed in terms of units of measurement.

Since no unit of measurement is applied by v. Wiese to his distinction of degrees, no quantitative difference between the main processes is in evidence. The difference between them remains purely qualitative. Competition, for example, which is less dissociating than opposition, according to v. Wiese, is not so many units less dissociating. Such differences as may be assigned to competition and to opposition are based upon experiences of individuals who discriminate between the function of different behavior-patterns and evaluate them with reference to each other within the specific setting of a given situation.

For this reason v. Wiese's scheme involving an ascending scale of association and dissociation is inaccurate. It would be more adequate to say that the succession of main processes, as given by him, are sequences of behavior-patterns by means of which complete association or dissociation tends to be accomplished. Thus, if there is an apparent connection between the main processes which permits us to represent them in the form of a " scale ", it is not because of difference in degree between them but because they manifest " stages " in the general process of association and dissociation between individuals. This proposition is supported by the fact that the main processes of the second order of relations are not distinguished by v. Wiese according to degrees of association and dissociation. A comparison of these processes

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 9. He also refers to his method as being essentially " mathematical-numerical," p. 17.

shows that they cannot be organized to represent successive stages of integration and differentiation between groups.

We may point out, in this connection, that the inapplicability of a distinction of comparative differences between these processes is a serious limitation in view of the fact that v. Wiese considers the comparative analysis of social processes in respect to association and dissociation the *specificum sociologicum.* He passes over it lightly although it impairs the validity of his main argument with respect to the nature of the sociological procedure.

The only acceptable proposition of v. Wiese's scheme for the systematization of social processes is their classification according to generality and type of relation which they represent. However, since this does not serve the purpose for which it was intended by v. Wiese, its only usefulness is that it furnishes a classified list of social processes.

### 3. *The Measurement of Single Processes*

With regard to the measurement of single social processes as to frequency of occurrence and duration, v. Wiese has not proposed a method of procedure. This question has been left by him in the form of a suggestion. The adequate handling of such measurements is not, however, a self-evident matter, and requires careful consideration. Their absence may be explained by the fact that v. Wiese has so far dealt only with the most general questions concerning social processes, which necessarily leaves out such specific aspects as frequency of occurrence and duration. There is left for our consideration only the question of the measurement of degrees of association and dissociation of the single process.

His proposals for their measurement reduce themselves to two:

1. The degree is determined by finding the position which the social process occupies in the table. That is, the process is subordinated to the main process of which it is a manifestation, and thus its degree is determined.

2. The process is compared with one or more other processes with reference to which its degree is determined.

Neither of these propositions represents quantitative measurements in the strict sense. The second is in effect a proposal for subjective evaluation. The first throws us back upon the "table of social relations". But there we have already seen that no quantification is to be found.

It appears, therefore, that v. Wiese also speaks without justification of the quantification of other than main processes. Neither is he justified in saying that the movements towards and away from others can be interpreted as modifications in the spatial position of two individuals.[1] He ignores the fact that direction of movement is spatial only in so far as it is determined with reference to some system of coordination in space. His statements disregard the fundamental fact that a mere assignment of a relative position to a social process does not yet quantify it. Again, there are no units suggested by means of which single processes can be expressed in quantitative terms, not to speak of spatial frames of reference.

It must be said, however, that while v. Wiese's proposition of measurement does not determine degrees of association and dissociation quantitatively or mathematically, these differences can for certain purposes be stated numerically. That is, a scale grading social processes from the weakest to the strongest with respect to association or dissociation can be constructed and arbitrarily numbered. It is very probable that it is this ranking procedure that v. Wiese has in mind when he speaks of measurement, although he nowhere specifi-

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 11.

cally refers to it.[1] But even then v. Wiese, in his endeavor to give mathematical character and exactness to sociology, has overlooked the fact that ranking does not express social processes quantitatively but merely assigns relative numerical values to them. His misconception of the nature of quantitative measurements is clearly exemplified by his suggestions for the measurement of social distance.

He says: "Let the distance to be traversed by A and B towards their unification be 50 and the tendency of A to unite with B be 60. Then there is enough force present in A (B being considered passive) to bring about the union. The obstacles that are there to be overcome, however, amount to 20. Then the result is a short distance of 10 between A and B."[2] The figures employed by v. Wiese in this example are arbitrary numbers: they have meaning only relative to something of the same kind. Notwithstanding that he adds and subtracts as if they were like units of measurement and do not merely indicate relative position of at least three entirely different things, i. e., distance, motive and "obstacle". While v. Wiese, as we may suppose, had the ranking method in mind, he furthermore failed to indicate to what purpose the ranking of social processes is to be employed. Shall it serve to determine correlations? And, if so, correlation between what, and in what way? These and other important questions v. Wiese has failed to consider. At best it can be said that in his system of sociology ranking serves this purpose alone, that it facilitates classification of social processes; beyond which no other possible use is in evidence.

[1] Such statements as: "the quantification of social processes shall give us their order in respect to each other," p. 16; "to reduce (social processes) to magnitudes of a single numerical array," p. 8; "to measure by means of comparison," p. 18—are definite enough to justify this assumption.

[2] *All. Soz.*, p. 179.

In addition to these shortcomings, v. Wiese failed to discuss the problems involved in the application of the ranking method for the purpose of classification. Specifically: on what basis is the amount of association or dissociation of two processes determined? To what extent can evaluation be made objective? What are the criteria of evaluation? These questions are not discussed by v. Wiese. This seems surprising since he himself recognized the difficulties involved in the mere ranking of social processes. Thus he realized that there are many action-patterns that cannot be unequivocally attributed to a basic process. For dealing with these, v. Wiese proposes a rule-of-thumb method: "If any social process has more than 50 per cent of the elements of approach it is to be called an associating process, if there are more than 50 per cent of the elements of withdrawal it is a dissociating process."[1] But how are the 50 per cent of "more or less" association or dissociation to be determined? v. Wiese answers, "By experiences of everyday life",[2] i. e., a method of subjective interpretation. Still, there are some social processes in view for which even this method is ineffective. For these processes v. Wiese had to form the category of mixed processes (*Mischbeziehungen*) with regard to which no ranking is possible.

Equal difficulties are encountered in the way of assigning a sub-process to a main process. What are the criteria by which the subsumption can be made objective? v. Wiese fails to indicate what has guided him in his decision to assign a sub-process to this and not to another of the main processes. It is significant that about one-third of v. Wiese's five hundred processes are classified under two or even three main processes and for that reason under different ranks.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 90.

[2] *Ibid.*

In view of all these shortcomings, we may say in conclusion, with reference to the question of measurements, that the task of sociological measurements has not been advanced by v. Wiese beyond the mere suggestion of the desirability of quantitative procedure, and the indication that the ranking method is applicable. Nevertheless, if viewed against the background of the trend of sociological thinking in Germany, this suggestion itself is of some importance, since it indicates a readiness to depart from the philosophical approach that predominated in German sociological literature.

### 4. *The Analysis of Social Processes*

The three tasks discussed so far: the definition, systematization and measurement of social processes, according to v. Wiese, constitute the primary object of sociology in its present state. He believes that his own proposals have shown that "sociology which is denounced as being hazy (*verschwommen*) deals with an object-matter which can be treated with precision and clearness".[1]

These tasks, however, while they are fundamental, do not exhaust the possibilities of sociological investigation. Besides the definition of the nature of the social process and the ascertainment of the degree of association or dissociation which it manifests, there remain numerous other problems for study. The social process is a complex phenomenon of which the concrete action-pattern is only a part. The other constituent elements have to be determined. Furthermore, there are specific conditions under which each process makes its appearance, which have to be investigated. This complex task which involves elemental analysis and fixation of conditioning factors, v. Wiese calls the analysis of social processes. This analysis is closely connected with the previous tasks, as it is of essential help for an adequate determination

[1] *All. Soz.*, p. 56.

of the degree of association and dissociation. But it involves a problematization of its own and constitutes, therefore, a separate task which requires special treatment.

In his sociological writings so far, v. Wiese has nowhere undertaken a concrete analysis of any of his social processes. He has suggested, however, a general formula according to which the analysis of social processes is to proceed and to which we now are turning our attention.

In outlining this formula,[1] v. Wiese's point of departure is the question of the causes of a given social process. This in turn resolves itself into the question of the circumstantial factors which prompt an individual or group to adopt a given course of action.

It is his contention that a social process (P) is due, first, to a dominant tendency, a guiding motive (A) on the part of the individual or group, and, secondly, to the existing situation (B). The initial formula, then, for the analysis of a social process is—

$$P = A \times B.$$

The motive (A) is a social motive—that is, it purports to call forth a reaction on the part of an individual or group. It constitutes the psychological element of the social process. v. Wiese assumes that "the whole scale of instincts, feelings, interests, thoughts and opinions" may come into play on the side of the psychological element that underlies the social process. But he favors Thomas and Znaniecki's attempt to reduce the "drives to action" to a limited number of dominant tendencies.[2] These would be the most prevalent and typical "motives" which primarily determine behavior towards others. He also accepts the four types of motives or wishes proposed by these writers. According to him they

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 124 *et seq.*

[2] P. 123.

require particular attention in the study of social processes since " they are particularly fit to serve as temporary working tools because they comprise a very wide and important sphere of human desires that are sociologically important ".[1] At the same time he asserts that a number of other tendencies merit equal consideration, but he does not attempt to supplement Thomas and Znaniecki's list.

According to v. Wiese, A and B in the above formula are in turn determined by certain factors which thus become additional constituent elements of social processes. The principal motive or attitude (*Haupthaltung*) is determined by the characteristic " individuality " of the acting individual or group (I) and by preceding situations ($B_{i.....x}$). Therefore

$$A = I \cdot B_{i.....x}$$

The two factors upon which A depends are not further analyzed by v. Wiese. He points out only that they probably have to be further subdivided. We may infer, however, that he had in mind differences in personality like temperament and intelligence, on the one hand, and past experiences which have conditioned individuals or groups to act in certain ways, on the other.

The situation B, according to v. Wiese, is a composite of the prevailing material circumstances (O) and the attitudes of those individuals or groups $(A)_f$ with reference to whom the social process is enacted. Therefore

$$B = O \times A_f$$

The complete formula for the analysis of a social process is thus

$$P = I \times B_{I.....x} O \times A_f$$

In other words, in studying the conditions that determine a

[1] *All. Soz.*, pp. 124, 126.

particular process at a given place or time, the individual traits of the actor (or the group traits in case of group action), the habits and customs, the material circumstances, and, finally, the prevailing attitudes and tendencies of the persons involved in the process have to be taken into consideration.

The assumption underlying the formula is that there exists a definite causal relation between a social process and specific conditions which can be stated in the form of a sociological law. Should the formula prove to be the adequate expression of the laws governing social processes, sociology would be enabled to acquire a body of nomothetical knowledge, that would permit the predictions of actions under known conditions and the deduction, from an observed activity, of the conditions which are its cause.

v. Wiese, as we have pointed out, did not apply his formula to a concrete instance. This makes it difficult to appraise the validity of his proposal, particularly in respect to its underlying assumption. On the face of it, it is doubtful whether v. Wiese's approach to the analysis of social processes can lead to the formulation of laws. This criticism is based upon the fact that both the number and the character of the factors included in the formula precludes statements of general validity. It is a recognized principle that the greater the number of factors considered in an analysis the more specific and circumscribed become the situations the appearance of which these factors explain. The more manifestations of a total setting of an occurrence are taken into consideration, the more is its uniqueness emphasized. The result is an *historical* account of the particular conditions in their unique combination explaining the occurrence, but not the formulation of a law which would be applicable to all instances in which the occurrence takes place. Thus neither laws nor generalizations are possible and predictions are unattainable.

v. Wiese's formula is essentially historical for two reasons:

1. It includes variables which are highly complex and, therefore, unique in their setting. Thus the "individuality" of the acting subject requires consideration of the whole life-history of the individual or group in order that its role as a contributory factor may be adequately appraised. Also, the factor $B_{1.....x}$ is broad and indefinite, as it includes any number of factors in a more or less unique combination which have a causal connection with the appearance of the given process. ("O"), the material circumstances, represents a complex which in every particular case is unique. The attitudes of others, finally, may be various, and in order to explain their role in the process, one must have recourse to the historical background that accounts for their presence.

2. It must, also, be said that some variables in v. Wiese's formula are factors which are not present in the actual situation but are antecedent to those which are the immediate responses. Thus "individuality" and "preceding situations" are not directly involved in a given process but are secondary and refer not to the process itself but to factors that have caused the process. In this the historical nature of the formula is again clearly manifested. Instead of treating the social process and its immediate correlates as a closed system, it proposes an exhaustive analysis of the total situation with all its antecedents without apparent limit, thus emphasizing the uniqueness of the setting from which the process arises.

It is evident, therefore, that v. Wiese's formula does not permit the formulation of laws governing the appearance of a given social process, and can only be considered as a scheme for an historical analysis. That is, not the appearance of a process in different situations is accounted for by the for-

mula but only, *post hoc,* its appearance in a particular instance with its unique setting.[1]

### 5. *The function of social processes*

According to v. Wiese, the function of a social process is the role which it plays in determining and influencing the life of society.[2] Thus to study the function of social processes means to give account of the consequences to which the enactment of a social process leads. To this task v. Wiese has devoted a considerable portion of his writings. He centered his studies of function primarily upon the main processes, and has followed to a considerable extent the interpretations of functions given to these processes by Ross in his *Principles of Sociology.*

It falls beyond the scope of this essay to give an account of this analysis. There is, however, a methodological question involved in v. Wiese's approach which requires brief consideration. There are two ways in which the function of a social process can be studied. In the first place the study may concern itself with the way in which a social process functions, i. e., the changes which it produces. This constitutes the empirical approach. Secondly, a social process may be studied from the point of view of the function which it fulfils, i. e., the purposes which it realizes. This constitutes the teleological approach, which implies values relative to which the realization of purposes is determined.

In his studies of functions v. Wiese attempts to conform

[1] v. Wiese's approach to the analysis of social situations is in sharp contrast to that proposed by Thomas and Znaniecki in the methodological note prefacing their study of the group life of Polish peasants. They suggest that sociological laws be formulated in terms of two variables: attitudes and values and their relation to each other. (*The Polish Peasant in Europe and America,* vol. i, p. 44), *cf.* also F. Znaniecki, *The Laws of Social Psychology, passim.*

[2] *All. Soz.,* p. 28.

to the requirements of the empirical approach. He accepts the postulate of non-evaluational analysis (*wertfreie Betrachtung*) which, under the influence of Max Weber, is recognized by most of the German writers on sociological subjects today as the guiding principle in all social investigation. It suffices to say here that its main thesis is abstention from the evaluation of societal occurrences as desirable or undesirable according to their positive or negative effect upon the realization of social values.

While v. Wiese has, on the whole, carried out the principle of non-evaluation, his writings testify to the difficulties that strict adherence to it involves.

Thus, v. Wiese's social philosophy is in evidence wherever he touches upon problems that, in one way or another, have practical implications. We need only to refer to the analysis of War in which he shows his liberalistic tendencies [1] or to his analysis of Dependence and Suffering (*Abhaengigkeit und Leid*) in which he criticizes the position of Mueller-Lyer and Oscar Blum.[2]

On the other hand, in his discussion of equality and exploitation, for example, he is impartial and judiciously objective. Indeed, more than any other contemporary sociologist in Germany, does he, on the whole, abstain from metaphysical and reformatory utterances.[3]

The fundamental difficulty involved in the postulate of non-evaluational interpretation in the field of sociology is that the sociologist, as an observer of social processes, at the same time participates in like processes as a member of soci-

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 180 *et seq.* v. Wiese has formulated his liberalistic social philosophy in his work, *Der Liberalismus in Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, Berlin, 1927. *Cf.* also his *Sozialpolitik*.

[2] *All. Soz.*, p. 78 *et seq.*

[3] v. Wiese's opinion on such utterances is stated on p. 176 and p. 139 of his *All. Soz.*

ety. Thus the standards of values and the opinions which he has as a participant in social life frequently and unintentionally interfere with the detachment required for objective observation. In other words, his "Weltanschauung" will always tend to impose itself upon his interpretation of social phenomena.

Theoretically, there is no reason why a study which is *wertfrei* should not be possible. We cannot agree with Professor E. C. Hayes, who claims that every societal occurrence carries implicitly a value, and that, therefore, all attempts at a non-evaluational procedure are contradictions.[1] This position ignores the fact that values are extrinsic to empirical reality. Ultimately the practical difficulty of a detached analysis may be overcome by practicing complete tolerance and full understanding, according to the maxim of Mme. de Stäel: *"Tout comprendre est tout pardonner"*.

### III. CONCLUSION

The primary object of v. Wiese's sociological writings so far has been the establishment and justification of sociology as an independent science. His achievement on this point is not invalidated by the criticism which we advanced against his proposals according to which the various tasks of sociology are to be carried out. v. Wiese is fundamentally sound in claiming a separate science for the study of social processes which involve the behavior of individuals or groups towards social objects. In restricting the field of this science to human interaction and to the social forms which result from the adjustment of man to man, as well as in his

[1] Prof. Hayes says: "All ultimate values *inhere* in social life.... This fact cannot be omitted from any objective and scientific description of the social reality." *Am. Jour. of Soc.*, vol. 33, p. 25; and more specifically: "many of the social processes relative to which Professor v. Wiese devotes his study are *inherently wertvoll*" (it. mine), *op. cit.*, p. 26.

tendency towards specificity rather than generality of procedure, v. Wiese is merely expressing what is rapidly becoming a commonplace notion among social scientists. He is also sound in insisting upon a behavioristic and quantitative approach, although he himself was not able to propose an adequate procedure for either one. Also, the tasks which he suggests for sociology distinguish themselves by their concreteness from those proposed by his predecessors. v. Wiese's shortcomings in the execution of these tasks do not affect their validity; nor do they preclude the possibility of an adequate solution.

In the last analysis, v. Wiese's shortcomings can be attributed to a mistaken approach to methodological problems. An adequate methodology can be built only from actual research, and no generalizations as to procedure should be made until they have been tested by a thoroughgoing application to concrete investigations. This fundamental proposition was ignored by v. Wiese, who has neither applied his suggestions to the study of concrete instances nor given an indication that he was basing them upon empirical material.

Apparently v. Wiese himself has realized the imperative need for sociological research in order to substantiate his claims. He has established an Institute of Sociology at the University of Cologne that is undertaking extensive studies of social phenomena. The first publication [1] gives fair promise that a continued accumulation of similar material may eventually lead to objectively valid methodological propositions.[2]

[1] *Das Dorf als soziales Gebilde*, München, 1928.

[2] A second part of v. Wiese's *Allgemeine Beziehungslehre* is to deal with social structures (*Gebilde*) which are, according to him, the crowd, the group and abstract collectivities (e. g., church, state). This volume has not yet been published. Some of its contents have appeared in the *Koelner Viertelsjahrhefte*, vols. vi and vii, and in *Jahrbuch fuer Soziologie*, vol. iii.

## CHAPTER IV

### The "verstehende Soziologie" of Max Weber

#### *Introduction*

Among contemporary sociologists in Germany none has penetrated more deeply into the methodological problems of the social sciences than has Max Weber. None has gone further than he in their treatment. Not satisfied with formal statements alone, he endeavored to deal with these problems concretely, and to point out practical ways of meeting them. Besides, in his methodological discussion Weber had the great advantage of a well-nigh universal knowledge of the factual material of the social sciences, from which he drew his illustrations and to which he applied his theoretical findings.

Weber was not a sociologist by profession; in fact he became interested in sociology only in the last few years of his life. His previous interests had covered practically the whole field of the social sciences. Weber was a leading authority and a most productive and original writer in the field of jurisprudence, political economy, history and comparative religion.[1] He was also active in politics and one of the recognized leaders of the democratic and liberal party in Germany. In this capacity he was bitterly opposed to the

[1] *Cf.* his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Tübingen, 1920; *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, Munich, 1921; *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen, 1922; *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*, Tübingen, 1922; *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sozial u. Wirtschaftsgeshchichte*, Tübingen, 1924.

pre-war régime, as his *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* testify, and was one of the few men in Germany who at the beginning foresaw the outcome of the war.

It is unfortunate for sociology that Weber began to concentrate his interest upon its problems so late in his life. After his numerous and profound studies of a multitude of social phenomena had led him to the realization of the need for a generalizing science of social behavior, he was able only to lay down preliminary formulation of a system of such a science. His premature death left his work unfinished. Not only have many things been left unsaid and undone but there are indications that the formulations he gave do not represent his final word. He was constantly at work on a revision and restatement of his thoughts, as a comparison of his first statement on sociology in 1913 [1] with his "Methodological Principles" of 1922 [2] clearly shows. This last-mentioned work and numerous references in his *Wirtschaft* and *Gesellschaft* foreshadow further developments, for his systematization is not complete.

Proceeding with a discussion of Weber's contribution to the methodology of the social sciences, and to sociology in particular, we begin with his definition of sociology. It may well serve as a starting point, since it includes all the aspects that are fundamental to Weber's methodological position.

Weber defines sociology as "the science which purports to interpret and understand social behavior, and in this way give a causal explanation of its course and effects".[3]

What Max Weber implied by "social behavior", "understanding" and "causal explanation", as well as the

[1] *Logos*, vol. iv.

[2] *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (W. u. G.), vol. iii of *Grundriss der Sozialoekonomik*, Tübingen, 1922, pp. 1-10; also in *Wissenschaftslehre* (WL.), Tübingen, 1922, pp. 503-523.

[3] *W. u. G.*, p. 1.

typological procedure which he proposed as a method of analysis, will constitute the main theme of our discussion.

### 1. *Social Behavior (soziales Handeln)*

Human behavior is, according to Weber, intentional action, i. e., action that has a more or less clearly perceived meaning to the acting individual. Behavior is social wherever it is carried out, according to the intention of the acting individual, with reference to the behavior of others and in its course is determined by the behavior of others.[1] Human behavior that takes only material objects and situations or isolated behavior such as meditation, solitary prayer, etc. into consideration is therefore non-social.

According to Weber, social behavior may be—

1. Rational-purposeful (*zweckrational*), when the expected behavior of others is employed as the condition or means for consciously desired and weighted purposes;

2. Valuational (*wertrational*), when the acting individual believes that a certain kind of behavior is required or expected of him by others. Behavior is typically "wert-rational" when it is carried out without regard to its effect and only out of consideration for its ethical, æsthetical or religious value;

3. Emotional (*affektuell*), based upon affective attitudes towards others, such as vengeance, devotion, etc.;

4. Traditional (*traditionell*), when behavior takes place in consideration of what is required by tradition.[2]

These four types represent ideal constructs (a term to be explained later). Very seldom does a given behavior-pattern express exclusively one type; nor do these types constitute an exhaustive classification of the kind of orientations

[1] *W. u. G.*, p. 11.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 12.

which prevail in social action. Weber proposes these typical ways in which social behavior is determined for purposes of comparison with actual instances of behavior as he has found them useful in his investigations.

From Weber's definition of social behavior it follows that social behavior is not identical with *any* form of pluralistic behavior nor with behavior that is influenced by, but not intentionally oriented with regard to, the behavior of others. Thus, to illustrate the first case, "the simultaneous opening of umbrellas on the street in case of rain is normally an orientation to the desire for protection against wetness, and therefore not social in the strict sense".[1] The second case is illustrated by the influence a crowd may exercise upon the behavior of an individual while his behavior is not intentionally carried out with reference to expected reactions of the crowd or its actual action.

In equal manner, behavior that constitutes a purely reactive imitation of the behavior of others is not social, because it is determined causally and not intentionally by it. But Weber is not dogmatic on these points. He recognizes that mass-influences and imitation constitute borderline cases of social behavior. Weber sees the reason for the fluctuating nature of the boundaries of the field of social behavior in the fact that an orientation with reference to the behavior of others, as well as the intention of a given act, cannot always be determined unequivocally.[2]

The social behavior that is most emphasized in Weber's sociological system and the one which he has made the basis for the discrimination of sociologically-relevant aspects of social phenomena, is reciprocal social behavior. Reciprocal social behavior constitutes in Weber's terminology a social relation (*soziale Beziehung*). The study of social relations

[1] *W. u. G.*, p. 11.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 12.

and the analysis of social phenomena is to Weber, as it is to Simmel, Vierkandt and v. Wiese, the central, although not exclusive, sociological theme.

According to Weber, social relations are present wherever two or more individuals interact in such a way that according to their intentions their behavior converges reciprocally one upon the other.[1] In other words, a social relation is present where individuals mutually base their actions upon the expected actions of others.

The expectation can be based upon knowledge of typical responses to given situations, upon agreement, or upon norms, which may be traditional, valuational, or legal.

Social relations may be temporary or lasting. Some of the types which he distinguishes and explains are the following:

*Conflict* — a social relation wherein A's behavior follows his intention to assert his own will against the resistance of B.

*Primary Group (Vergemeinschaftung)*—a social relation based upon a subjective feeling, affective or traditional, of belonging together (*gefuehlte Zusammengehoerigkeit*).

*Secondary Group (Vergesellschaftung)*—a social relation based upon a rationally motivated balance (*Ausgleich*) or combination (*Vereinigung*) of interests.

*Association (Verband)* — a social relation in which the maintenance of order is guaranteed by the activities of a leader (*Leiter*) and an administrative staff (*Verwaltungsstab*).

The last three relations may either be "open" or "closed", depending upon whether participation in them is restricted or unrestricted.[2]

[1] *W. u. G.*, p. 13.

[2] *W. u. G.*, pp. 20-28.

These types of relations are given here merely to indicate their conformity to the types dealt with by other sociologists and to show Weber's way of defining them. The great wealth of other types of social relations has found full consideration in Weber's analytical and descriptive writings.

Weber's most significant contribution to the theory of social relations and one that differentiates his position from that of Simmel, Vierkandt and v. Wiese, is his analysis of the nature of these relations and of the role they play in sociological investigation.

Weber realized the necessity of giving an interpretation to social relations that would preclude their identification with super-individual structures, social organisms, forms and other constructs of sociological metaphysics. For this reason he insists that the phenomena to which the terms "social relation", "structure" or "form" are applied are only names for specific action-patterns of separate individuals (*einzelner Menschen*).[1]

Only the behavior of individuals may be said to be concrete to Weber. Thus concepts like state, association, feudalism, are only categories representing certain ways of human interaction which, when analyzed, have to be reduced to the activities of the individuals participating in this interaction.

The fact that these collective terms sometimes suggest the idea to individual minds that they represent something real, and thus lead them to orient their behavior with reference to these imaginary entities, does not disprove his contention. Weber does not elaborate this point, but it is clear from his general position that in actuality individuals respond not to ideas but to the expected behavior of others, and that the collective terms are merely vague and shorthand expressions for complex behavior-sequences.

Neither does the occasional need for sociological explana-

[1] *W. L.*, p. 514.

tion of behavior-sequences in terms of functions, as part of a whole, support the contention that this "whole" is something apart from individual acts. According to Weber a functional point of view is acceptable merely for purposes of practical demonstration and provisional orientation, as it sometimes helps in the discovery of the behavior-patterns that are important for the explanation of a given situation.[1]

In order to avoid the metaphysical interpretations of collective terms Weber proposes that all social relations be defined as chances or probabilities indicating that behavior of a certain kind, under given circumstances, will take place. He says: "A social relation, be it state, church, community, marriage or friendship, has its existence exclusively and alone in the probability that mutually-determined behavior of a certain type has taken place, is taking place, or will take place." [2] In other words, social relations are concepts of certain behavior-sequences for which the probability of their occurrence or recurrence under given circumstances exists. All collective terms then represent merely chances that certain actions will be repeated.

The application of the concept of probability to the interpretation of social relations and, as we shall show later, to sociological "laws" and generalizations is one of the few significant theoretical contributions in the field of social theory in recent years. It proposes a formulation which offers an escape from sociological realism and a kind of nominalism that interprets, as, for example, v. Wiese does, social forms or structures as ideas (*Vorstellungen*)[3] in the minds of individuals.

In contrast to Simmel and Vierkandt, Weber does not propose that sociology center its attention upon the analysis of

[1] *WL.*, p. 515.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 13 *et seq.*

[3] *Beziehungslehre*, p. 25 *et seq.*

social relations as "pure forms" or trace their "phenomenological content". The "basic sociological concept", and all formulations and generalizations, rules and laws serve merely as tools for the analysis of social phenomena. They are tools in the true sense of the word, fashioned by the investigator and adapted to the material at hand. They are not "real", in the sense implied by Simmel; nor do they possess a "true essence", as Vierkandt proposed. For this reason Weber's sociological investigations have never centered upon social relations as such, but have dealt with concrete manifestations of social behavior in the various phases of social life or culture—economic, juridic, religious, political, etc.

With the exception of strictly methodological considerations that are of common import to the study of each phase, the sociological interest, following Weber, branches out into various disciplines, among which he distinguishes: the sociology of economic life (*Wirtschaftsoziologie*), sociology of religion (*Religionssoziologie*), juridic sociology (*Rechtssociologie*), and the sociology of political life (*Herrschaftssoziologie*). They represent the divisions with which Weber himself has dealt more or less systematically.[1] They can, however, be multiplied to include all aspects of social life.

### 2. *The Postulate of "Understanding"*

As stated before, intentionality in social behavior is to Weber the characteristic that is most relevant for sociological analysis. The intention with which a given course of behavior is carried out, Weber calls the meaning (*Sinn*) which the behavior has to the acting individual or individuals. The meaning in question is not the meaning which may seem objectively valid to the observer in a given case. Nor is it to be taken in any metaphysical sense as the "true meaning".[2] It is, for purposes of sociological investiga-

[1] *W. u. G.*, pp. 181-193, 386-512, 603-612.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 1.

tions, always the actual subjective intention (*subjectiv gemeinter Sinn*) of the acting individual or individuals. If necessary, it may also be represented as the average meaning where there are many instances of like behavior, or as the typical meaning in case a typological procedure is attempted. Max Weber realized that the meaning of an action is not always clearly perceived by the actor.[1] There are degrees of explicitness in meaningful behavior. Most explicit of meaning is behavior carried out with a clearly defined purpose in view, and applying rationally most adequate means toward its realization. Pure reflex action, on the other hand, is "meaningless", as the direction of the action is not intentional, and the means are not selected with forethought. Between these two extremes fall the great majority of cases of human behavior, with traditional or habitual behavior on the borderline of the second. As previously stated, Weber takes the position that the actual line between meaningful action and behavior with no subjective intention attached to it is of a fluctuating nature, and cannot be drawn with precision.

The significant point of Weber's emphasis upon the meaning-moment in social behavior is his conception of the role which it plays in determining the direction and procedure of sociological investigation. According to Weber the discovery of meaning is the primary object of sociological research. Whether the object be causal explanation of occurrences, construction of types of behavior, or formulation of sociological rules, meaning is central to all these attempts.

The justification for this position Weber sees in the fact that the primary interest in the study of human behavior is to *understand* that behavior. He says: "Our causal need demands that we proceed interpretatively where there is the possibility of interpretation" (*Deutung*).[2] Empirically-

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *WL.*, p. 69.

ascertained conformity to regularities or laws is not sufficient for the interpretation of human behavior. Interpretation in Weber's sense is accomplished whenever the meaning of behavior is ascertained; that is, when the intention or motive of the acting individuals is discovered. For, to understand human behavior, it is by no means enough to give, e. g., the most exact statistical proof of a high correlation between a given situation and a corresponding action. It is necessary, in addition, to show why the action took place at any given time, and particularly why it should generally follow the same pattern.[1] To answer the question "Why?" is to understand the action. This understanding is not reached until the motivation underlying the action is reconstructed. A statement as to the regularity of an occurrence remains more or less negative, and only through the addition of an interpretation from motives does the causal explanation become positive.

The possibility of understanding is peculiar to human behavior which makes its analysis qualitatively different from that of natural phenomena, where an attempt at interpretation can lead only to a metaphysical anthropomorphism. We cannot "understand the behavior of cells".[2] In the natural sciences interpretation is superfluous; in the social sciences it is, according to Weber, a postulate.[3] No causal explanation here is complete unless we can understand the connection by comprehending the underlying meaning.

The postulate of "understanding" delimits, according to Weber, the field of sociology. Sociology is concerned only with occurrences that are understandable, or, in Weber's words: "to sociology, the causal connections that have an explicit meaning attached to them are objects of investiga-

[1] *WL.*, p. 70.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 6.

[3] *Ibid.*

tion".[1] While thus intentions (motives and purposes) and the process of their realization are the constituent elements of sociological investigation, this should not imply that they represent the only data with which the sociologist is dealing. Occurrences which are not intentional "are not for this reason sociologically indifferent".[2] They are "meaningless" in so far as they do not appear in a relation of means and purposes to social behavior and, therefore, cannot be comprehended. They are taken into consideration, however, when they function as "occasions, results, promoting or checking a social action".[3] These may be natural occurrences, biological or psychological facts, or the pressure of external circumstances.

A further limitation imposed by the postulate of "understanding" is that it prevents the reduction of social behavior to psychological or physiological facts or processes. Only the fact that behavior is a function of the individual's intention and of the situation with regard to which he acts is of importance to sociology. For other than strictly sociological purposes it may be expedient "to treat the individual as a complex of biochemical reactions, or analyze the constituent elements of his psychic life".[4] Whatever information may be gained in this way will not, however, contribute to the understanding of social behavior. Between psychological and physiological processes on the one hand, and social behavior on the other, there is a gulf due to the fact that into the latter enters the subjective element of meaning, intention or purpose which cannot be derived from the function of these processes. The same motive may be due to "opposite psychological constellations and qualities of character",[5] and

[1] *WL.*, p. 513.
[2] *WL.*, p. 406.
[3] *W. u. G.*, p. 3.
[4] *WL.*, pp. 415, 513.
[5] *WL.*, p. 406.

similarity of meaning is not bound to similar psychological or biological processes. A theoretical example of Weber's illustrates this point. Suppose it has been found that the ability for rational action is correlated with a cephalic index and that this ability prompts the desire to obtain social power. This fact would be taken into consideration by sociology, like, for example, the fact of human mortality. They are not *objects* of sociological investigation. The task of sociology begins only when it becomes necessary to explain interpretatively through what meaningful behavior the attempt was made to realize desire for social power which is conditioned and prompted by a hereditary quality; why it has succeeded or why it has not; and what understandable effects this desire had upon the meaningful behavior of other individuals. The established correlation is the underlying condition which the desire for power originates. But, like any other psycho-physical laws and regularities, it does not help the sociological interpretation of the course that behavior of a given kind takes.[1] For this purpose only knowledge of the social situation is prerequisite.

Weber's negative attitude to psychological reductions leads him to advocate an approach to the study of social *institutions,* which is very similar to Rivers' and which since has become known as the "cultural approach". According to Weber all attempts at a psychological interpretation of social occurrences have shown that an analysis of social institutions cannot be made with the psychological properties of man as a starting point. On the contrary: psychological interpretations presuppose an acquaintance with social institutions and their objective causal conditions. One can never "deduce social institutions from psychological laws or explain them from elemental psychological processes".[2]

[1] *W. u. G.*, p. 3 *et seq.*

[2] *WL.*, p. 189.

To Weber an interpretation in terms of motives and subjective meanings is not a psychological interpretation. In fact Weber denies emphatically that his *verstehende Soziologie* be considered as a part of psychology.[1] The fact that all human behavior has a subjective aspect does not imply that psychology is needed for its understanding. This would be like claiming that "because statesmen employ sound-waves and ink-drops in their political activities, acoustics and the theory of capillary attraction should be considered indispensable for purposes of history".[2] A *psychological* explanation proceeds by reducing observable processes of human action, including motives, to psychological processes, fundamental desires, instincts or glandular secretions. A *sociological* explanation shows how human behavior is determined by the definition or interpretation given to an objective situation by the acting individual or individuals. It arrives at an understanding of social behavior, not by deriving it from or reducing it to elemental psychological facts, but by showing what concrete subjective expectations have been held with regard to the behavior of others, based upon personal experiences or a rational comprehension of the situation.

In emphasizing "understanding" as the basic sociological approach and in using it to circumscribe the field of sociology Weber follows a trend of thought that has recently become prevalent in Germany. It affects not only social scientists like Sombart,[3] but also psychologists like Jaspers,[4] and philosophers like Spranger [5] and Rickert.[6]

[1] *WL.*, p. 408.

[2] *WL.*, p. 82.

[3] *Cf.* his introduction to the collection of excerpts of various sociological works, entitled *Soziologie*, Berlin, 1924.

[4] Jaspers, *Psychopathologie*, 2nd ed., 1927.

[5] Spranger, *Lebensformen*, Berlin, 1922.

[6] "Die Erkenntnis der intelligiblen Welt u. d. Problem d. Metaphysik," *Logos*, vol. xvi, 1927.

The movement that brought the question of *verstehen* into the foreground of the methodology of the social sciences began with Dilthey.[1] Dilthey proposed a psychology which he called *geisteswissenschaftlich* and contrasted with the psychology founded upon the premises of the natural sciences and the experimental method. The last, according to him, considers psychological processes as external occurrences of nature, while the first deals with these processes as they are given in immediate experience and, therefore, can be apprehended intuitively (*durch Zusammenwirken aller Gemuetskraefte in der Auffassung*).[2]

We shall quote the main argument of Dilthey in support of the theory of *verstehen,* as it is basic for the whole point of view and appears, although in different formulation, in Weber's arguments. After pointing out the fact that the sciences of culture (*Geisteswissenschaften*) require a different methodological approach than the natural sciences and that all methodology has to adapt itself to the nature of the object of investigation, he says: "Natural sciences are distinguished from culture sciences in that all facts of nature are given to the senses as external phenomena while the reality and the concrete connections (*lebendige Zusammenhaenge*) of cultural-phenomena are apprehended innerly." It follows that in the natural sciences connections between facts can be established only by means of hypotheses while in the culture sciences these connections are experiential (*Zusammenhaenge des Seelenlebens*) and immediately apprehended by insight. We explain (*erklaeren*) nature, but we *comprehend* (*verstehen*) culture and the psychic experiences upon which it is based. Because of this, special methods are required for the study of mental life, history and society. So far as the new psychology is concerned, its object matter

[1] "Ideen zu den Geisteswissenschaften," *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. i.

[2] *L. c.,* p. 172.

is "the analysis of the inner connections that are active in the social and historical, purposive systems of economic life, law, art and religion". The fundamental method of such a psychology is inner perception (*innere Wahrnehmung*). Through it "we become conscious of our own mental states and we comprehend them without the mediation of the senses". Similarly we comprehend the motivations.[1]

Jaspers, a disciple of Dilthey, has gone further in the analysis of this question by characterizing the process of comprehension as "the way by which an 'inner causal nexus' (*Kausalitaet von innen*) is discovered". This he calls genetic comprehension. It ascertains how one psychic fact arises from another whereby the evidence of the actuality of this connection is an irreducible last fact of consciousness. These "last facts" function like Kant's synthetic *apriori* judgments: "they are present wherever experience takes place but are not derived from experience and cannot, therefore, be inductively proven".[2]

The line of reasoning followed above is strongly reminiscent of the arguments of the phenomenological school of which Vierkandt, as has been shown, is an adherent. It is presented here to indicate a dangerous implication of the postulate of understanding, as it easily leads into the deep waters of phenomenology. But it is not the only possible line of reasoning. Another one has led to the development of a so-called structural psychology particularly in the writings of Spranger. None of these two represents the line, however, which Weber pursues.

Of Dilthey's contentions Weber accepts primarily the proposition that "to understand" is the characteristic procedure of the social sciences, and that by neglecting it these sciences cannot adequately fulfil their task. But *verstehen*

[1] *L. c.*, p. 173 *et seq.*

[2] Jaspers, *l. c.*, p. 79.

to him has no phenomenological aspects. He takes it in its simplest sense, to imply the fact that human behavior is directed towards objects, that it intends to achieve certain results, and that by ascertaining the effect which was expected, we are able to understand a particular case of behavior, i. e., comprehend why such and no other behavior had been carried out at this time and place.

Weber avoids all phenomenological implications by insisting that "understanding presupposes experience and can be demonstrated as valid only with reference to experience".[1] He also voiced very strongly his objection to the claim that the logical structure of the social sciences should be considered different from that of the natural sciences; and that the social sciences in particular involve a different principle of causation.

The "insight" which understanding implies has, according to Weber, no inner evidence that can be accepted as a criterion for its validity. Its validity has to be demonstrated, and demonstration requires the procedure employed by the natural sciences and presupposes, without exception, generalized knowledge. It appears only superficially that "the use of rules of experience for the purpose of checking interpretations of social behavior seems to differ from the procedure adopted with regard to objects of nature".[2]

In criticizing the claims of Muensterberg, Gottl and others [3] who have emphasized the evidential nature of intuition, Weber points out that the psychological process of obtaining knowledge should not be confused with the question of the empirical validity of that knowledge.[4] "The

[1] *WL.*, p. 115.

[2] *WL.*, p. 111.

[3] *WL.*, p. 63 *et seq.*, referring to Muensterberg's *Grundzuege der Psychologie*, vol. i, Leipsic, particularly.

[4] *WL.*, p. 117.

evidence obtained by means of the process of comprehension cannot be identified with the empirical certainty of interpretation." Thus Weber clearly recognizes the hypothetical nature of "inner evidence", for which others have claimed absolute validity, and the need for its verification by the universal principles of scientific method.

Weber has summarized his own position in the following way:

> Neither the particular quality of the material of investigation, nor ontological differences of its existence, nor finally the kind of psychological processes by which knowledge is obtained decide its logical nature or its validity. Empirical knowledge, whether in the realm of the mental (*geistig*) or of external nature, whether of occurrences within us or outside of us, is always bound to apply the same means of conceptualization.[1]

And with reference to the difference between natural and social sciences he asserts that the logical peculiarity of our knowledge of the "social" as contrasted with the logical peculiarity of our knowledge of "nature" has nothing to do with a discrimination between "psychic" and "physical"; between "personality" and "behavior" on the one hand and "dead, natural objects" and "mechanical processes" of nature on the other.[2]

To Weber "understanding" is just as "objective" as any other form of causal explanation in spite of its element of subjectivity.[3] It is clear, however, that the results of an interpretation in terms of motives will have to be more fragmentary and hypothetical than the discovery of a causal nexus in the natural sciences.

Weber recognized this and, hence, distinguished between

[1] *WL.*, p. 126.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *WL.*, p. 134 and note, p. 95.

adequate motivation, in the sense of a sufficient reason for behavior, and causal adequacy.[1] The latter is accomplished when the probability of the recurrence of a phenomenon under the same circumstances is empirically ascertained. He proposes, therefore, that in order to achieve scientifically valid explanations in sociology both tests of adequacy should be accepted as criteria, since "an adequate motivation will remain a mere supposition, unless the probability of its recurrence under the same conditions is determined. And, in turn, even the highest probability without adequate motivation will remain an incomprehensible statistical probability." [2]

It seems clear, therefore, that with his postulate of understanding Weber keeps close to the ground of the empirical. No other sociologist in Germany has stated more adequately his position on the sociological dilemma of the "subjective-objective". Weber also is practically alone in his insistence on the application of the statistical method in sociological investigation. His postulate of understanding which he combines with the statistical method could only be rejected if the proof were given that the subjective side of human behavior, i. e., the motives and intentions of actions, could be dispensed with and the explanation of behavior still be complete. But such proof has not been forthcoming.

In our discussion of the character of the postulate of understanding we have neglected the question of the procedure by which understanding is obtained. To this question we must now turn our attention.

Weber distinguishes two ways by which "understanding" is obtained and two kinds of "understanding" that have to be taken into consideration.

[1] *WL.*, p. 511.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 6.

*a.* The means by which understanding is accomplished

According to Weber, we comprehend the meaning of a given behavior-sequence or act—

1. Intellectually, if the behavior is rational.

The rationality of an act depends upon the logical transparency of the deductions drawn from a situation by the acting individual, the logical consistency of the behavior-sequence, and the rational use of means utilized to accomplish its purpose.

If we recognize the logic of a given behavior-sequence, we understand it intellectually.

2. By means of "empathy", if the act is irrational, i. e., emotional.

Empathy is achieved by projecting one's self into a situation and experiencing what Weber calls the emotional context (*Gefuehlszusammenhang*), which it involves. As in the case of rational behavior, where understanding is in greatest evidence when the logical process is familiar to the observer, so in the case of irrationality, understanding possesses greatest evidence when the emotional context represents a familiar experience.[1]

Weber realizes that there are types of social action which cannot be fullly understood either intellectually or by means of empathy. These are actions which depart so much from prevalent forms of motivation, either purposeful or emotional, *e. g.,* cases of fanaticism, that the actual motivation cannot be reconstructed with perfect evidence.

It appears, therefore, that understanding has for its prerequisite familiarity with certain lines of reasoning or certain emotional experiences, and that the whole process of understanding is subjective in the sense that the observer's own

[1] *W. u. G.*, p. 2.

knowledge and experience are his guides in the discovery of the motivation of a particular instance of behavior.

### *b.* The kinds of understanding

According to Weber there are two kinds of understanding accomplished by means of either the intellectual or the empathy approach. They both emerge from the fact that every instance of behavior manifests two distinct aspects.

1. There is, first, the overt aspect, the act itself which may be a verbal statement, an emotional expression (like anger registered in the face) or a performance (as the action of a person chopping wood). This understanding of thought, recognition of an emotion or comprehension of a performance, Weber calls understanding of the actual (*aktuelles Verstehen*). Understanding of the overt aspect of behavior is the most common form of understanding. The meaning which an overt act possesses is known as the intrinsic meaning of objects of experience. This meaning is acquired by a process of conditioning and is based upon familiarity with and knowledge of experiential objects.

2. Besides its intrinsic meaning, every instance of behavior has also an extrinsic meaning. The extrinsic meaning is, according to Weber, the motive that underlies the overt act. The discovery of motives constitutes the second kind of understanding which Weber calls explanatory understanding (*erklaerendes Verstehen*).[1]

It is through the motives involved that the observer understands why an overt act is performed at a given time and place and in a given connection. The motive explains the act if only there exist a meaningful connection between them. This meaningful connection (*Sinnzusammenhang*) [2] is the

[1] *W. u. G.*, p. 3.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 6.

basis of the second type of understanding. It implies a recognition of the adequacy of a motive-act relation, i. e., that the act is an adequate instrumental process for the realization of the motive. The extrinsic meaning is based upon knowledge and familiarity with motive-act relations. Accordingly, a connection between the two is recognized as adequate in meaning if the observer in projecting himself into the situation realize, intellectually or emotionally, that under similar conditions he would act in the same way. To the extent to which he is able to reconstruct the motive-act relation and associate it with his own experiences he is able to understand the extrinsic meaning of behavior.

The analysis of the ways and kinds of understanding explain the general nature and process of understanding but do not throw enough light on the question as to how the actual meanings in a given case are ascertained. The intrinsic meaning presents essentially a logical problem. But the discovery of motives is a fundamental methodological question in the social sciences.

Weber has not attempted to solve this question, except that he has pointed out that the outcome of a behavior-sequence may sometimes offer an adequate clue to the underlying motivation. But he believes that interpretations in terms of motives will always have a more or less hypothetical character. Because of rationalizations and repressions, even the frankest self-confession can be only of relative value. And the mere fact that a given situation seems to the observer to be adequately explained by assuming the presence of a certain motive is not sufficient to establish the validity of the interpretation. It is often the case that a different motive or set of motives would make the situation equally understandable.

### 3. *Causal Explanation*

To Weber the search for motives is not the exclusive task in the causal explanation of social occurrences. Weber realizes that any social fact or situation is due to a great number of determinants which act as conditioning factors. Obviously, the intention or motive is not more important in explaining the total effect than are the factors of the situation which condition both the motive and the end-effect. He clearly states that "the social sciences do not consider exclusively the 'inner side' of social phenomena but also deal with the constellation of external factors, in so far as they condition mental processes or are the results thereof".[1] And in his *Religionssoziologie* he has made the significant statement that it should be the task of the sociologist "to discover as far as possible all the influences and causal connections which are explainable in terms of reactions to existing situations" (*Schicksale und Umwelt*). Here the importance of conditioned responses rather than of motives is emphasized.

To the procedure of the social scientist in arriving at a determination of causes Weber has given careful attention.

Weber had a great amount of respect for the statistical method, and throughout his writings the influence of his statistical readings, particularly of v. Kries and L. v. Bortkievitch is evident.[2] But he realized the limitations of the statistical method in sociological investigations and, therefore, attempted to devise other means which would supplement it. All these attempts, however, are built around the general theory of probability, and thus far the fundamental proposition of the statistical method remains dominant.

[1] *WL.*, p. 78.

[2] *WL.*, p. 269: v. Kries, *Uber den Begriff d. objectiven Moeglichkeit, etc.*, Leipzic, 1888; v. Bortkievitch, *Die Erkenntnistheoretische Grundlagen d. Wahrscheinlichkeitsrechnung*, Conrads *Jahrbücher*, 3 Folge XVII.

The limitations of the statistical method proper Weber sees in the fact that it is most effective only where the factors of the situation can be expressed numerically and when interest centers only on quantitative aspects. It is this interest in particular which sets the limitation to the application of the statistical method in sociology. According to Weber sociology is interested not only in correlations and averages but also in the qualitative aspect of social situations. But contrary to the idealistic conception of social reality, like Vierkandt's, for example, Weber accepts the theory of an all-permeating quantitative aspect of reality. He has stated that " all qualitative differences can be expressed, in the last analysis, in some form of quantitative difference of the way in which elements appear in various combinations " (*Mischungsverhaeltnisse*).[1]

Weber considers this a self-evident proposition without apparently realizing that far from being such, it constitutes the fundamental methodological problem in the social sciences. Besides, his failure to elaborate on the proposition seems to contradict his statement with reference to the essentially qualitative aspect of human behavior. The discrepancy could presumably be bridged by referring to a previous statement of Weber's according to which there is a definite limit to the analysis into elemental factors for sociological purposes. Accordingly, the " quantification of qualities " would not be a sociological task, since it would not contribute to the understanding of social behavior. Yet whatever the explanation may be, the practical limitations of the statistical method for the present will have to be recognized.

The partial inapplicability of the statistical method in sociological investigation, however, does not constitute, according to Weber, a handicap that can prevent the formulation of generally valid propositions in sociology in the form

[1] *Religionssoziologie*, vol. i, p. 265.

that definite situations favor to a greater or lesser degree like reactions of individuals who are confronting them.[1] He upholds this thesis against Meyer, Muensterberg and others, and even claims that the degree to which such correlation holds true can be ascertained although not expressed numerically.

It should be emphasized here that Weber accepts a thoroughgoing regularity in social life and the possibility of prediction of behavior. He not only points out in many instances the extent to which human behavior takes cognizance of and follows established rules of experience, but he also asserts that there is no difference in predictability as between the natural and the social sciences. This statement, of course, does not refer to abstract relations, like the fall of a body in a vacuum, which can be predicted with absolute certainty. It refers only to the prediction of concrete events. Here the degree of certainty to be attained in both the natural and the social sciences is about the same, and exactness of prediction will depend in either case upon the availability of adequate source material.[2] And in both groups of science the possibility of showing the causal *necessity* of an event is an exception and not the rule. For example, Weber points out that in meteorological prediction there is much less certainty than in the prediction of the conduct of an individual with whom one is well acquainted.[3]

The question of "free will", which frequently is raised in connection with the predictability of human behavior, Weber does not consider of enough consequence to affect the postulation of an inherent difference between the nature of the subject-matter of the social and that of the natural sciences. The irrationality of "personality", which Knies

[1] *WL.*, p. 285.

[2] *WL.*, p. 63 *et seq.*

[3] *WL.*, p. 65.

emphasized, plays, according to Weber, only a small role in human behavior. Indeed Weber proposes the rather startling thesis that the more free a "will" is the more predictable is the behavior. Free will is active where external pressure or irresistible impulses do not influence a decision. In such a case the individual will manifest behavior which is rationally most adequate for the realization of his purpose. He will follow accepted rules of experience and, therefore, his behavior from a known purpose can be predicted with great, if not absolute, certainty.[1]

Weber did not satisfy himself with stating generalities about social causation but dealt concretely with the methods to be followed in the causal explanation of social phenomena. His statements to this effect arose out of a dispute with E. Meyer about the methods to be followed in the explanation of historical events.[2] They apply, however, also to sociology, since they present the same methods which Weber utilized in his sociological investigation.

According to Weber there are two problems which confront the social scientist in regard to causal explanation:

1. How can an event be related to a specific cause or causes when in reality any given occurrence is due to an infinite number of causal factors all of which are necessary for its appearance?[3]

2. If specific causes are found, how can it be determined with certainty that they actually constitute the determinants of a particular event?[4]

The first problem Weber attempts to solve by pointing out

[1] *WL.*, p. 132.

[2] *Archiv f. Sozialwissenschaften u. Politik*, vol. 22, 1905, and *WL.*, pp. 215-290.

[3] *WL.*, p. 271.

[4] *WL.*, p. 273.

that many factors can be shown to be causally irrelevant on the basis of factual knowledge. By knowing the usual function of factors and then "thinking them away", it may be ascertained with reasonable certainty whether or not their absence could have any effect on the actual course of the event. The factors which can be "thought away" in this manner are causally irrelevant.[1]

Weber's statement with regard to the first problem may be interpreted in the following way:

The causal irrelevancy of a factor depends upon the degree of variability with which the problem phenomena can be concomitant without undergoing a change. The greater the variability, the less relevant is the factor. This is most adequately expressed in terms of a low or zero correlation. The elimination of factors for a causal explanation of an event follows, therefore, the accepted principles of the theory of probability.

That this interpretation is in line with Weber's general theory of causal explanation is confirmed by the way in which he solves the second problem. The solution is a logical sequence of this interpretation, since Weber proposes that invariability be made the criterion for causally *relevant* factors. That is, a factor that cannot be reasonably thought of as being different or absent without producing a change of the event must be considered a determining factor of the event.

The fixation of non-variants follows, according to Weber, a process of abstraction which consists in an isolation of certain components of a situation and the ascertainment of the probable effect of each. Then it can be shown that certain factors have checked these probabilities but favored the probability which the given event has realized. These factors may be considered the causes of the event. Such a pro-

[1] *Ibid.*

cedure Weber calls, following Kries' terminology, an application of the method of obecjective probability (*objektive Moeglichkeit*).

The implication of this position is that every situation contains a number of possibilities of development and that particular factors decide which possibility shall be realized. The following example will illustrate this procedure.

It is claimed that the battle of Marathon was a determining factor in the development of Hellenistic culture. Weber, following Meyer's attempts to prove this, shows that at the time of the battle there were two possibilities of development implicit in the situation in Greece: a theocratic-religious culture (exemplified by the mysteries and oracles) and Hellenistic culture (beginning of Greek philosophy). The battle of Marathon checked the first possibility of development, since a Persian victory, judging from the effect which it produced in other countries, would have led to the probable result that under the aegis of a Persian protectorate the theocratic element in Greece would have become predominant. With a different outcome of the battle of Marathon there would have then existed the probability of a different historical development. The battle, therefore, can be accepted with reasonable probability as a non-variant, a determining factor in the development of Hellenistic culture.

A different form of the application of Weber's method of procedure is shown in his studies on the sociology of religion. At the same time the scientific value of these studies is a fair test of the practical possibilities of the method in spite of its obvious limitations.

The phenomenon which Weber sets out to explain in these studies is the appearance, at a particular time and place, of an economic organization based upon, what he calls, the spirit of capitalism (*Geist des Kapitalismus*). This organization is represented by modern occidental capitalism which

possesses features distinguishing it from all other forms of "capitalism". Its dominant feature is a thoroughgoing rationalization of business procedure, as exemplified in accountancy, calculation of chances, free work, industrialization, commercialization, emphasis upon efficiency, etc. In a causal explanation of this phenomenon the form and tendencies of modern capitalism economic conditions must play an important role. But Weber proposes that, "like rational technique and rational law, the rationalization of business procedure must also depend upon the ability and disposition of individuals to practical rational modes of conduct" (*Lebensfuehrung*). Furthermore, the formative influences of prevailing modes of conduct are to be seen, according to Weber, in beliefs in magical and religious powers and the ethical ideas of duty based upon them. On the basis of these two considerations, derived from observations, Weber sets out to prove that there is a definite correlation between forms of economic organization and types of religious ethics. Employing a wealth of factual material Weber first shows that there is a definite and understandable connection between modern capitalism and the ethics of ascetic Protestantism. He then shows, by analyzng the other major religious systems (Judaism, Confucianism, etc.) and the social and economic organization associated with them, that with different ethical ideas the economic organizations tend to be different. In this way he establishes a reasonable probability of an existing "strain of consistency" between religious and ethical beliefs on the one hand and type of economic organization on the other.

The procedure of causal explanation proposed by Weber is used in lieu of the experimental and the statistical methods wherever these are inapplicable. It can be seen, however, that the principles which it follows are the same as those upon which the statistical method is based. The main dif-

ference lies in the fact that Weber's method is a mental process of abstraction, isolation and generalization, while the statistical method employs a mathematical procedure. Weber's method is not, however, for this reason, wholly subjective or arbitrary. The checks which it constantly employs and which constitute its criterion are generalizations from experience and observation that are verifiable on the basis of factual material. Any judgment as to the probable effect of a component part of a situation is based upon knowledge of the way in which this factor generally functions in other situations. Such generalized knowledge as to a probable effect (called by Weber *nomological knowledge*) takes the place of mathematically-ascertained correlation. There is nothing, however, in Weber's method that could take the place of partial and multiple correlations and of the check by means of the probable error.

In the majority of instances the results obtained by means of Weber's method will be more problematical than the results achieved through the application of the statistical method. On the other hand, Weber's method permits the analysis of occurrences to which the statistical method is not, or is not yet, applicable.

Weber himself frankly realized the problematic nature of his method. He pointed out that the analysis of a complex situation into its component parts has to be more or less arbtrary, as no key to such analysis is objectively given.[1] Also, that the role of imagination in determining what could have happened had a component been different opens the door widely to subjective interpretations which sometimes may lead to "monstrous results".[2]

He believes, however, that if the hypothetical nature of the causal explanation derived by his method is clearly recog-

[1] *WL.*, p. 287, note.

[2] *WL.*, p. 282, note.

nized, it can serve as a useful tool notwithstanding its shortcomings. According to him, for practical purposes it is oftentimes sufficient to show that on the basis of known generalizations from experience a given factor can be accepted as a probable cause or declared causally irrelevant. Such statements will be of varying degrees of certainty; and the degree of certainty can always be ascertained by means of a thought process in such way that a complex of probably determining factors is confronted mentally with as many as possible combinations of other factors. The more combinations are thinkable in spite of which the event remains the same, the more certain is the causal adequacy of the assumed determining factors.[1]

We have pointed out that the most important thing in Weber's method of causal explanation is "nomological knowledge", i. e., the generalizations from experience. It is defined by Weber as the formulation of regularities of behavior "particularly of the way in which individuals react to given situations".[2] They constitute rules as to human conduct derived from experience and observation. That these regularities of behavior are not merely the result of a conformity to norms of conduct established by society is indicated by Weber in his controversial article in response to Stammler.[3] Weber points out that human behavior does not orient itself exclusively with reference to social regulations but also the meaning of a situation, and that, therefore, there are definite regularities of behavior that are not derived from social control. General rules of behavior should, therefore, not be confused with norms of conduct, a confusion of which Stammler was particularly guilty.

[1] *WL.*, p. 286.

[2] *WL.*, p. 276.

[3] *Archiv f. Sozialwissenschaft u. Politik*, vol. 24, 1907; also *Wissenschaftslehre*, pp. 291 *et seq.* and pp. 556 *et seq.*

General rules in the social sciences have the same structure as laws in the natural sciences, i. e., they are formulations of a prevalently observed causal connection. Weber, however, does not claim for the generalizations on social behavior the attributes of laws. To him they are only probabilities, and he defines them as " typical chances for the expectation of a certain course of action under the presence of certain conditions ".[1]

The discovery and formulations of rules of social behavior constitutes, according to Weber, the contribution which sociology makes towards the causal explanation of concrete occurrences. Sociology to Weber is a nomothetical science. Its purpose is similar to that of the natural sciences.[2] It proceeds, therefore, by means of abstractions, and deals with the typical rather than with the individual and unique. Sociology is thus distinguished from history in the commonly accepted way.

In its generalizing procedure sociology specifically attempts to formulate general rules of behavior and of typical situations. He says: " Sociology constructs type-concepts (*Typenbegriffe*) and rules of behavior ",[3] i. e., searches for empirical regularities and types of behavior.[4]

But according to Weber it is not necessarily evident that all our generalizations from experience have to be expressly formulated. Some of the regularities of behavior are matters of everyday experience and do not need to be especially formulated.

Triviality or universality of experience decides when a formulation is not necessary. On the other hand, formulations will be of value wherever everyday experience is not

[1] *W. u. G.*, p. 9.
[2] *WL.*, p. 322.
[3] *W. u. G.*, p. 9.
[4] *WL.*, p. 381.

sufficient to give the degree of relative certainty that is required for causal imputations and where new insight can be brought into a situation.[1]

But the formulation of rules and types of behavior is not, according to Weber, an end in itself. As they are to serve as tools for the explanation of concrete occurrences, this consideration commands a specific structure for the formulation of rules and types of behavior in sociology different from that of laws and generalizations in the natural sciences. It is to the nature of this structure that we shall turn now.

### 4. *The Structure of Sociological Rules and Types of Behavior*

The proposition as to the kind of conceptual formulations (rules and types) which are to be constructed by the social sciences is the most important methodological contribution of Weber.

Two assumptions are fundamental to this proposition. First of all, Weber asserts that conceptualization does not have for its purpose the production of mental pictures of "objective" reality. This postulate of the epistemology of the old schoolmen he rejects as inadequate.[2] To him, as to Kant, conceptual formulations are merely heuristic means for the purpose of organizing the chaos of the empirically given. The practical consequence of this assumption is that it makes the whole process of conceptualization elastic and adaptive. Concepts lose their rigid character and there is no room for philosophical implications of their transcendental significance. They are tools that can be shaped and reshaped according to the exigencies of the situation.

The second assumption implies a relativistic position with regard to the procedure of conceptualization. The assump-

[1] *WL.*, pp. 112 *et seq.*

[2] *WL.*, p. 208.

tion is that within the realm of the social sciences conceptual formulations depend upon the way a problem is put (*Stellung der Probleme*) and that this alters with the changes in social life itself.[1] The work of the social sciences consists, according to Weber, in a constant process of reshaping the formulations with which they attempt to organize empirical reality. Thus "the history of the social sciences was, and will be, a constant change from attempts at formulation, to the dissolution of set formulations (because of the enlargement of the scientific outlook and a change in viewpoint) to new formulations upon the revised outlook".[2]

These two assumptions: that concepts are tools modeled according to the problem in hand and the relative nature of conceptual formulations, put Weber in opposition to those who claim that the goal of the social sciences is to bring their factual material into a system of conceptual formulations, and that after completing this system it will ultimately be possible to draw from it deductions as to the way things will occur.

According to Weber no such systematization for purposes of deduction is possible, as the factual material of the social sciences represents an infinite and limitless stream of occurrences, an inexhaustible realm of possibilities. Besides, the points of view from which even a single occurrence is an object of investigation are changing; "always new and differently colored are the problems that concern men". And points of view will continue to change indefinitely "unless a Chinese ossification of the mental life of humanity shall prevent human beings from putting constantly new questions to the life they live which always remains inexhaustible".[3]

For another reason the concreteness of social reality can

[1] *WL.*, p. 207.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *WL.*, p. 184.

never be deduced from laws or generalizations. Each constellation of factors of an individual phenomenon is unique, and unique are the constellations of factors which are the causes of this phenomenon.[1] What the particular cause is cannot then be ascertained by means of laws or generalizations. They help only in ascertaining the causal adequacy of a factor which has to be determined by the usual methods of investigation. Generalizations in the social sciences do not serve, therefore, the purpose of prediction but only help to demonstrate adequacy of causal imputations.

Behind Weber's assumptions there may be seen a speculative philosophical attitude about social or cultural reality. But it is beyond the scope of this essay to attempt a genetic derivation of this attitude and to show its influence upon other aspects of Weber's thinking—as, for example, his insistence upon non-evaluation[2] and his pessimism as to the function of science as expressed in his justly famous essay on science as a profession.[3]

From the recognition of the fact, that conceptual formulations in the social sciences serve the role of tools and are not to be constructed for the purpose of systematization only, follow definite directions as to the structure which they should possess.

In the first place, formulations of rules and types of behavior should not be made too general and abstract. The more general a formulation is, the less it can help the understanding of the significance of social occurrences.[4] Formulations must be concrete enough to be close to empirical reality. While they will be thus specific, they will necessarily

[1] *WL.*, p. 174.

[2] *Logos*, vol. vii, 1917-18; also, *Wissenschaftslehre*, pp. 451 *et seq.*

[3] *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, Munich, 1919, also *WL.*, pp. 556 *et seq.*

[4] *WL.*, p. 178.

be limited in their application, i. e., they will be valid only for a limited group of phenomena.

Secondly, the formulations must be precise and clear. For this reason they will necessarily have to be one-sided, that is, represent only a certain specific aspect of an occurrence. One of the reasons for precision and clearness is the complexity of social occurrences. Every occurrence of social life is a composite of a number of aspects and of complex causal connections. To analyze an occurrence, one-sided precise formulations of these aspects are necessary[1] although they may be only more or less distinctly manifested. Thus "the same historical occurrence, for example, may be in some parts feudal, in others patrimonial, or bureaucratic, and in still others, charismatic".[2] In order that these concepts may have an unequivocal meaning it is necessary to construct each as a pure type the meaning of which is entirely adequate. Although such types never appear in reality in this ideal and pure form, "similar to a physical reaction which is calculated under the assumption of a perfect vacuum",[3] they represent the only means by which reality can be adequately comprehended.

Thirdly, the formulation has to be genetic, i. e., include the typical conditions for the appearance of the aspect formulated. In case of social behavior, these conditions will be motives essentially. Formulations in sociology, therefore, must conform to the postulate of understanding.[4] These three requirements: specifically, pure form and genetic considerations, are not satisfied, according to Weber, by the kind of conceptual formulation commonly employed. Neither

[1] *WL.*, p. 170.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 9; "charismatic": from charisma—grace. Meaning similar to "mana."

[3] *WL.*, p. 512.

[4] *WL.*, p. 202.

general concepts (*Gattungsbegriffe*) nor averages (*Durchschnittsbegriffe*) serve the desired purpose.

With regard to the first, Weber says that the syntheses which social occurrences present cannot be defined according to the scheme: *genus proximum, differentia specifica.* This is possible only in the field of dogmatic disciplines that operate with syllogisms.[1] No scheme is acceptable that merely serves the purpose of indicating the species under which an occurrence, as a specimen, can be subsumed. General concepts, including complexes of traits which are common to many phenomena, are justified only where a simple classification is attempted. Wherever the specific characteristics of an occurrence are to be stressed general conceptual formulations are out of place.

Averages, according to Weber, likewise do not serve the needs of the social sciences. They can be formulated only when behavior of like meaning appears in different degrees In the majority of instances, however, "behavior that is sociologically relevant is influenced by heterogeneous motives between which an average in the strict sense of the word cannot be drawn".[2]

Weber proposes, therefore, that all conceptual formulations and definitions in sociology be expressed in terms of *ideal constructs* which he calls an *Idealtypus.* An *Idealtypus* (ideal type) is built by means of a one-sided emphasis and intensification (*Steigerung*) of one or several aspects of a concrete occurrence, and represents a uniform mental structure (*Einheitliches Gedankengebilde*).[3] The selection of the aspects to be included is determined by the various points of view from which a given occurrence may be analyzed. Accordingly, a number of ideal constructs will usually represent a given occurrence.

[1] *WL.*, p. 194.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 10.

[3] *W. u. G.*, p. 190 *et seq.*

"Ideal types", furthermore, are built to include conditions which typically lead to the appearance of the content which they formulate. For example, "exchange" is a general concept so long as the significance of the component elements of its content is disregarded. If "exchange" is looked at, however, from the point of view of the law of marginal utility, "exchange" is ideally constructed as a rational economic process and assumes genetic character, as it includes a typical condition of exchange.[1]

The *Idealtypus* conforms, therefore, in all respects to the requirements for the structure of conceptual formulations in the social sciences. The final reason for the formulation of ideal constructs is stated by Weber in the concluding words of his discussion of the methodological principles of sociology: "As to method of procedure, we have very frequently to make a choice between indefinite (*unklar*) and precise formulations. The last are always unreal; they are ideal constructs. But they are scientifically preferable." [2]

Ideal constructs are merely logical expedients. They do not purport to be empirically valid. Nor should it be assumed that they represent "the true content, the essence of historical actuality . . . . or an idea which stands behind reality and is hypostasized as a real force".[3] Weber also holds that the prefix "ideal" has only a logical connotation and does not imply evaluation. "It has nothing to do with any but a purely logical perfection." [4]

This does not mean, however, that an *Idealtypus* is a haphazard construct. It always must be objectively probable, i. e., conform to our nomological knowledge of social behavior and of its motivation.

[1] *WL.*, p. 202.
[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 11.
[3] *WL.*, p. 295.
[4] *WL.*, p. 200.

How are the ideal constructs to be utilized in concrete investigations?

The main purpose which the ideal construct serves is that it furnishes a means by which concrete occurrences can be *compared* and *measured*.[1] In this application of the ideal construct lies its practical methodological significance which distinguishes it from any other kind of conceptual formulation.

The ideal construct furnishes a point of reference with regard to which social reality is analyzed and interpreted. Its application is, schematically presented, as follows: A concrete situation is compared with ideal constructs; it can then be ascertained—

1. To what extent the actual situation realizes these ideal constructs. In this way the relative importance of the factors which the ideal construct comprises can be measured.

2. The difference between the actual course of a behavior complex and its ideal-typical construction facilitates the discovery of the actual motives or conditions which have determined the existing situation. Thus the ideal construct of rational exchange compared with an actual instance of exchange will permit us to ascertain the extent to which rational motives and in what way other motives, have influenced the behavior in question.

To use an example from Weber, we may build an ideal construct of the transformation of an economic organization based upon handicraft into one based upon capitalism. Starting with the assumption that in a society organized on strictly handicraft lines the only source of income is land rent, the ideal construct of the transformation will include the following factors for its causes: limited supply of land, increasing population, influx of precious metals, rationaliza-

[1] *WL.*, pp. 189, 199.

tion of conduct. These factors are derived from nomological knowledge on the basis of which we know how each of them functions. The ideal construct is then compared with the historical course of events. If the ideal construct is logically correct but the actual course does not wholly correspond to it, then the proof is given that in certain respects the society of the Middle Ages was based not only upon handicraft. At the same time the investigation will be directed towards other factors that had a positive or negative effect on the development in question.[1]

In sociology proper, the same application prevails. Thus Weber constructs ideal types of domination based upon various motives,[2] and then compares these with actual forms of domination in order to ascertain to what extent these motives were effective, whether other motives have been involved and to what extent the actual form is a complex of different types. Weber's theory of the ideal construct throws new light upon such constructs as Constant's theory, Gresham's law, and Marx's theory of economic determinism. As ideal constructs, with which actual conditions are compared in order to determine the significance of the factors or processes postulated by the theory, they are highly useful. If they are taken, however, to be empirically valid, they are scientifically inadequate.

According to Weber all conceptual formulations in sociology could best be made in the form of ideal constructs, since only in this form can they be practical and effective in causal explanation. Since they are by definition not descriptions of actual situations, they do not need to be discarded, if it is shown that they depart from empirical validity, so long as they are useful for purposes of comparison and

[1] *WL.*, p. 93.

[2] *W. u. G.*, p. 124.

measurement. This differentiates the *Idealtypus* from a hypothesis.[1]

### 5. *Types of Ideal Constructs*

In his historical and sociological writings, Weber employs two kinds of ideal constructs:

One is applied to individual historical occurrences which are called by Weber, who here follows Rickert's terminology, *historische Individuen*. To this type belongs, for example, Weber's formulation of an ideal construct of modern capitalism.[2]

The other is applied to recurrent and prevalent phenomena which usually appear as constituent elements of social occurrences. Such are, for example, Weber's three "pure types" of domination, the processes of transformation of one into the other, etc.[3]

Both types are formulated in the same way—through abstraction and intensification of the aspects which constitute the significance and peculiarity of the phenomenon.

The first are highly complex, while the second have a simple structure. The historical *Idealtypus* joins "a mass of diffuse and discreet single phenomena into a uniform structure".[4] The ideal type of general phenomena is a formulation of prevalent types of behavior and the ideal typical conditions for their appearance.

The last type represents ideal constructs which may be

[1] Weber's *Idealtypus* is a "fiction" in Vaihinger's sense. For a more detailed analysis of the relation of fiction and hypothesis, *cf.* "Die Philosophie der Als-OB," chapt. xxi.

[2] *Religionssoziologie*, vol. i, pp. 4-12.

[3] *Cf. W. u G.*, p. 144 *et seq.* A. Walther points out that another type implicit in Weber's writing are ideal constructs of functional and structural connections of social occurrences. (*Jahrbuch f. Soziologie*, vol. ii, pp. 45 *et seq.*

[4] *WL.*, p. 191.

considered specifically sociological. Together with sociological rules, they are formulated by sociology for the analysis of social phenomena, and after they are systematized they may be said to constitute the body of theoretical sociological knowledge. Weber has given examples of this systematization in his attempts to systematize the conceptual formulations employed by the sociology of domination and by the sociology of economic life.

We may say in conclusion that the value of Weber's method of ideal constructs, as well as his method of causal explanation, lies in the fact that he employed them in the course of his investigation of social occurrences, and that he thus gave a demonstration not only of their application but also of their practical value. Weber represents that rare type of social scientist who tested his method before he generalized upon it. Furthermore, his systematizations of sociological rules and types of behavior preceded and were derived from a life work on monographical studies of a vast number of social phenomena. It is unfortunate only that he was prevented from completing his system of sociology and from giving the final formulation of his methods.

## Conclusion

The main purpose of our discussion of the methodological aspects of Simmel's, Vierkandt's, v. Wiese's and Weber's systems of sociology was to test the proposition that "sociology" can be considered a special and autonomous science dealing with a circumscribed field of its own.

We stated in the preface that the validity of this proposition rested upon

1. An adequately delimited subject-matter,
2. Justifiable tasks of investigation,
3. A basis for the systematization of the subject-matter,
4. Adequate methods of investigation.

To what extent do the four systems presented in this essay conform to these requirements?

*Adequate subject-matter.* Our discussion has shown that all four writers are in substantial agreement as to the subject-matter of the new social science. Simmel's social forms, Vierkandt's social relationships, v. Wiese's social processes and Weber's types of social behavior differ only in terminology but are the same in nature and substance. They all refer to behavior-patterns and behavior-sequences that are aspects or results of interaction between human beings. The subject-matter embraces a specific type of activities, i. e., actions, the object of which are individuals and groups, the processes resulting from these actions, and the relations which they establish.

The distinct character of these aspects of social life justifies the establishment of a separate discipline that should attempt their systematization, their causal explanation, and the discovery of the regularities which they manifest. It must be conceded, therefore, that the works of the four writers which we discussed give sufficient evidence to satisfy the first requirement for the constitution of a new discipline.

*Adequacy of tasks.* Our analysis of the four attempts to build up a science of forms, processes, or types of interaction has shown clearly that the isolation of a subject-matter alone is not sufficient for their realization. The pivotal point is not so much the subject-matter as the adequacy of the tasks which are to be pursued in the study of this subject-matter.

Our discussion of Simmel's proposal has shown that the task of studying pure forms in abstraction from content is untenable. The impossibility of an abstract formalism does not, however, impair the autonomous character of a science of social behavior, since it is not the *sine qua non* for its validity. To this end it is sufficient to study, as Weber does, social reality with reference to and from the point of

view of the constituent elements and the aspects of social behavior (forms, relations, processes), without eliminating the historical actuality from consideration and concentrating upon these elements and aspects *per se*.

The task envisaged by Vierkandt: to study the phenomenological content of abstract social relations is equally unacceptable. It leads into the pitfalls of a subjective idealism and is philosophical-speculative rather than scientific in character.

In the sociological systems of v. Wiese and of Weber we find, however, a more adequate formulation of tasks. The proposition to measure and analyze social processes and to study their function in society which v. Wiese suggests, together with Weber's proposition that ideal constructs of types and regularities of social behavior be formulated, constitute a fairly complete set of tasks that justify a separate discipline.

*Basis for systematization.* Simmel's contribution to the systematization of the subject-matter of the new science is essentially negative. His peculiar attitude towards life has led him to avoid all attempts at systematization. His "sociology" therefore appears haphazard and indefinite.

The systematization according to the basic social relations proposed by Vierkandt is too limited to be adequate. v. Wiese's systematization according to degrees of association and dissociation manifested in social processes is essentially sound, but it is of no particular practical significance.

It is only in Weber's typological procedure, where the aspects of social behavior are presented as typical manifestations, defined as ideal constructs and classified accordingly, that an approximation to an adequate basis for systematization is accomplished. While Weber has not given a completely convincing systematic treatment of social behavior, he has nevertheless shown clearly the possibility that the third

requirement for the constitution of a science of social behavior can be adequately met.

*Methods of analysis.* Of the four writers whose sociological systems we discussed Weber alone has given adequate consideration to the question of methods. v. Wiese's proposal of a behavioristic and quantitative approach stands merely as a valid suggestion, for he failed to execute it convincingly.

Weber's proposal of methods of causal explanation and the use of ideal constructs is far-reaching in its practical significance and although open to criticism requires serious consideration. Still it is far from constituting a satisfactory solution of the problem of methods. It must be said, therefore, that to a large extent the four writers have not succeeded in meeting the last requirement, which demands adequate methods of analysis.

In spite of evident shortcomings, it must be stated that the four systems, taken as a whole, make a fair case for the justification of the validity of a special and autonomous science of social behavior. In conclusion we may say, therefore, that the possibility of a science that would realize the contention which is original with Simmel cannot well be disposed of. There is still a wide field open for development, and different lines of approach may be necessary in order that more fruitful results be attained. But the foundation of the science as laid down particularly in the sociological systems of v. Wiese and of Weber must be regarded as secure.

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ABBREVIATION OF NAMES OF PERIODICALS

*AP—Archiv fuer die gesammte Psychologie.*
*ASP—Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik.*
*KV—Koelner Viertelsjahrshefte fuer Soziologie.*
*SJ—Schmollers Jahrbuecher.*
*WA—Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv.*
*ZS—Zeitschrift fuer die gesamte Staatswissenschaft.*
*ZVS—Zeitschrift fuer Voelkerpsychologie und Soziologie.*

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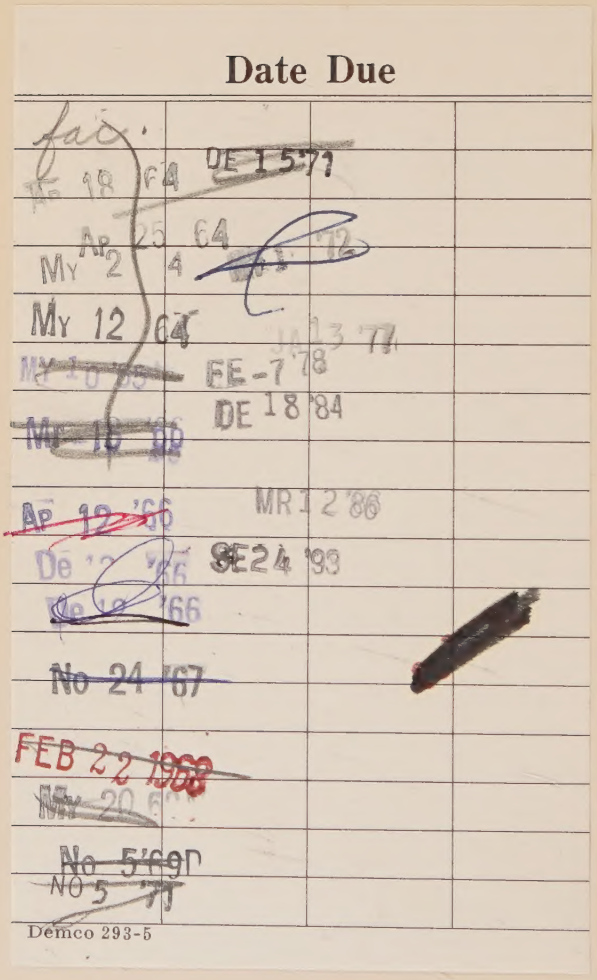


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